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Practical Discourse

CONCERNING

God's Love

TO

MANKIND.

WRITTEN

For the Satisfaction of some  
Scrupulous Persons.

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By EDWARD PELLING, D.D.

*Chaplain in Ordinary to their Ma-  
jesties, and Rector of Petworth  
in Sussex.*

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L O N D O N ,

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An Advertisement  
TO THE  
READER.

**T**Hough the Doctrine of God's Decrees, if rightly understood (as those Decrees are set forth in the Scripture, with equal Conditions, and the most precious Promises annext unto them;) though, I say, the right Notion of them be of great Use, and unspeakable Comfort to such as lead Godly, Righteous and Sober Lives, yet Mistakes about them are of very dangerous consequence, especially where those Errors rise so high, as to render the ever Blessed God, a Stern, Arbitrary, and Cruel Being, that hath Consigned the far greatest part of Mankind to Eternal Torments, meerly of his own absolute Purpose and Pleasure. This naturally serves, not only to discourage People from the Practice of Vertue and Holiness, and to make them Careless, whe-

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ther they do well or ill (which alone is enough to prove the Falshood of such Opinion) but moreover to fill their Minds with Horror, and by degrees to cast them into the very Gulph of Desperation, unless they can screw up their Imaginations to such a lofty Pitch, as to believe themselves to be absolutely Elected unto Salvation, which yet is to contradict their own Principles, by pretending to understand a Decree, which they confess to be Secret.

It is therefore a most Necessary work of Charity, especially where ones Conscience is burden'd with a Cure, to teach People such open, and such encouraging Truths, as these, That the Lord is Good to All, and his tender Mercies over all his Works, Psal. 145. 9. That God is no Respector of Persons; but in every Nation, he that feareth him and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him, Act. 10. 34, 35. That he is not willing, that any should Perish, but that all should come to Repentance, 1 Pet. 3. 9. And that their Labour

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bour shall not be in vain in the Lord,  
1 Cor. 15. 58.

Nor are such Instructions ever so seasonable, as when Peoples Minds are disquieted and gall'd with frightful apprehensions of God, as if he had put the generality of the World, under a fatal necessity of Eternal Damnation; and that too to shew his Power, and without Consideration had of their Actual Enormities. If the Case of so many Millions of Men comparatively Innocent, be so Miserable and Desperate, such as Reflect upon the many Sins and Crimes they have in the Course of their Lives committed, cannot well chuse but be possess'd with such sad and dismal Thoughts, as directly tend to make them sink under the pressure of them, and to throw away all hopes of Mercy; and what a wretched Condition such Souls are in, none can tell but those that feel it, nor indeed are they themselves able to express it sufficiently. A 4 To

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To prevent this intolerable Mischiefe, is the Design of this following Discourse; which was occasioned first by a long Paper, that in December last, came to my Hands from a very Sober, Worthy Person in this Town, though then unknown to me. The Substance of it in short was this, That He, and divers others of the Parish, had somewhere heard such bold Doctrines concerning God's Decrees, as seem'd utterly Repugnant to the Divine Goodness, Mercy, Righteousness, and Truth: That their Minds were very much discompos'd and troubled upon it, and therefore did earnestly desire me, out of tenderness to their Souls, speedily to Preach upon some Subject, that might ease their Minds, and give them satisfaction.

Having Read and Consider'd this serious Letter to me, I could not but hold my Self Obliged by the Duty of my Place, and in common Charity and Justice

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Justice to those, whom the Providence of God hath committed to my Care, to do something, that might tend towards the removing of those Scruples and Anxieties, which I perceived did disturb and ruffle divers of them. Such inward discomposures are of dangerous Consequence, if not duly regarded in time; and though Men who understand the Business of a Pulpit, know very well, that generally it is no fit Place for Controversies; yet it must be acknowledg'd, that special Emergent Occasions dosometimes make it necessary for us to handle Points which People doubt of; especially if those doubts become an affliction, and if the Points do nearly concern the Substantials of Religion; and if the clearing of them maketh way for Plain and Practical things, which we should always have an Eye upon, as being much better, because more useful, in order to the great ends  
of

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*of Christianity of which kind is that weighty Point in Hand. For as long as God is believed to be truly loving unto us all, and Christ is lookt upon as a common and conditional Saviour, all thinking Men will find great necessity and encouragements for them to live Godly, Righteously and Soberly; according to Christ's Laws: But if instead of this, People think themselves sure of Salvation; whatever the Quality of their Lives and Actions be, and learn the Art of relying upon particular absolute Decrees; they must in the Consequence believe, the Entire Practice of Christian Morality, to be an unnecessary matter: Talk while you will of the Essential Duties of Religion, God and Man must stand to their Courtesie for them; because they think there is behind the Curtain an Absolute and Irresistible Decree, that is on their side, and secures them from all Danger of Eternal Perdition.*

*Re-*

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Besides it is Notorious, that among those who have believed the Rigid Doctrine of Fatality, and could not work themselves into such a favourable and confident Perswasion of their Safety as others have done; but have Reflected upon their condition with a Melancholy Eye, as if they were under God's absolute Displeasure and Sentence: Divers have Proceeded to final Desperation, and by their own Hands have fallen most sad Sacrifices to their Opinion; which would not have proved so mischievous, had it been Rectified in time.

These single Considerations relating to the great Interest of Religion, and to the Peace and Welfare of People, did very strongly induce me to Answer in some measure, the repeated importunities I found in the Letter I Speak of.

And yet there was something else in it which did much affect me, tho' for some Days, I knew not who was the Author;

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thor; yet by the general Air of it, I perceived that the Person who Writ it, had a very Religious Sense and Esteem of God. For one thing which seemed to disquiet him in a great measure was, how to Reconcile the Doctrine of the supposed absolute Decrees with the Honour of God; especially with those glorious Attributes, his Veracity, Righteousness, Goodness, &c. which shine so very bright in the Holy Scripture, and in his Works which render him a Being Transcendently adorable and lovely. This was to me an Argument of great Piety and goodness of Mind in the Author, accompanied with a Serious Admiration and Affection towards the Divine Majesty. And when I came to understand who it was, and what his Circumstances were, I had great reasons to believe, that the earnest request to me, proceeded from no other principle, but a Religious and well governed Zeal for God's Glory. I



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I could not but be exceeding glad to find one of his Age and Condition, to entertain such worthy Notions of his Creator, and to be so concern'd for his Honour, because the like Instances are not common, especially in some Places; and after all this, to have slighted a request, which I believed, could come from nothing, but a Thoughtful Mind, and a True Principle of Piety, would have been an Omision Inexcusable.

Upon these Motives, I resolved to Compose a little Discourse concerning this Matter, though one of another Nature was just then under my Hand; and for my Subject, I pitch'd upon those Words in St. Joh. 3. 16. a place of Scripture, which I thought was the more proper to be considered, because the pressing of that single Text, and the Reasoning out of it at the Famous Synod of Dort, had such a wonderful Effect upon our Learned Mr. Hales, that it quite changed his Judgment as to some Opinions, which he carried with him when he went thither,

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as that Excellent Person Mr. Farindon assures us, in his Letter prefix'd to Mr. Hales his Golden Remains.

One of my mean Abilities, and ordinary Station, cannot hope to make such Happy and Useful Impressions, as were so Providentially made upon the Mind of that great Man. My business lieth in a Country Parish, where Nice and Scholastical disputations would be lost, even among those, who are more Intelligent, and more Inquisitive into matters of Speculation, than others have Time to be. And therefore my purpose was, to digest what I had to say, into such a plain Method and Form, as I conceived might be most for the Edification of People, whose Education cannot furnish them with Extraordinary and Eminent capacities; especially as to this sort of Knowledge.

In order to it, I thought it best to omit a great many things, which are Collaterally incident to this Copious Subject, and of an Abstruse Nature, and to say no more than what was just Necessary, that I might

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might contract all within as Narrow a Compass, as 'twas possible for me. And that People might not run away with Notions only (as many are very apt to do, quite Forgetting, or over-looking the Principal business) I endeavoured to render the whole Discourse the more Useful, by making it as Practical as the Subject Matter would allow.

And first I did not intend this thing should have gone any further than my own Pulpit, where I was desired to Satisfie some Scrupulous Persons; and that being done, I was Satisfied my Self, in having answered my Duty.

But divers of my Parishioners having requested, that the Discourse might be made Publick, in hopes that it may have the same good Effect upon others, which, They say it had on Them; I am the more willing to comply, because some Heady People in these Parts, who are very fond of Rigid Principles, and seem to value themselves upon them, have (as I am credibly told) scattered abroad many  
false

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*false Representations of the whole thing.*

*In short, if what is here done, may  
be of good Use to any one Person in the  
World, I shall count my Labour very  
well bestowed.*

Petworth, Feb.  
the 1<sup>st</sup>. 169<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>.

*Edm. Pelling.*

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John

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John III. 16.

*For God so Loved the World, that  
he gave his onely begotten Son,  
that whosoever believeth in  
him, should not perish, but  
have everlasting Life.*

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CHAP. I.

*The Interpretation of our Saviour's  
words, John 3. 16. What is meant  
by the World; and what by God's  
Love to the World.*

**T**HESE are our Blessed Saviour's  
own words, delivered in as Ex-  
press and Positive a manner, as  
is possible for any Tongue to  
speak; and therefore Men should take all  
imaginable care, that they do not ei-  
ther Wrest, or Mistake the true sence of  
them.

**B**

**THEY**

## A Practical Discourse upon

THEY contain Two things which are most observable in them. 1. The great Principle, or Inward Cause that moved God to send his Son in the Flesh; it was out of pure Love to the World. 2. The great End which he proposed and designed thereby; it was, *That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

FOR our more profitable Instruction out of this portion of Scripture, Three things are necessary to be consider'd in their order:

*First*, What is the true meaning of our Saviour's words in this place.

*Secondly*, The Article which they yield us:

*Thirdly*, And Lastly, What Practical Inferences may be gather'd from the whole.

I. FIRST, That we may rightly understand our Saviour's meaning, these two things are to be explained.

I. FIRST, Who are here meant by *the World*.

2. SECONDLY,

2. **SECONDLY**, In what sence God is said to have *loved the World*, antecedently to the coming of Christ, and while the World yet lay in a state of sin and wickedness.

1. **SOME** understand, by *the World*, onely a small part of the World; a few People whom they suppose to have been ordained to Salvation by God's absolute will, and peremptory pleasure, without any consideration had of their Faith and Repentance; the little World of the Elect, as those Men are wont to express it. But this is a very False and Groundless notion; for the word is no where used in this sence in all the *New Testament*. It never signifies the Vessels of Election onely, but is always taken in a Bad sence; for *the Children of wrath*; for *the Evil World*, as the expression is, *Gal. 1. 4. for the World of the ungodly*, as it is *1 Pet. 2. 5.* Usually the word denotes all sinful Men together in a Lump; and sometimes it means the very worst part of them. So said *Christ* to his Disciples, *John 15. 18. If the World hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you:* there it signifies the malicious Adversaries of the Lord *Jesus* and his Religion. And so *John 17. 9. I pray not for the World:*

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there

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there it signifies, Impenitent and Obstinate Infidels. So 1 Co. 2. 12. *We have received, not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God* : there it signifies Men of a wicked and Ungodly Temper. Again, 2 Cor. 5. 19. *God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself* : there it signifies the Enemies of the ever blessed Being. Again, 1 John 5. 19. *The whole World lieth in wickedness* : there it signifies abominable People, whose minds are set upon that which is evil, and that continually. Again, John 14. 17. *Christ saith, The World cannot receive the Spirit of Truth* : there it signifies the Oppugners of Christianity. And again, St. Paul saith, 1 Cor. 11. 32. *When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the World* : there it signifies the Sons of Perdition. This fearful account cannot possibly be given of God's Elect; it is utterly inconsistent with the notion and state of all such; because the Chosen ones of God are those, and onely those, who shew the truth and vigour of their Faith, by all holy conversation and godliness. Though *they are in the World*, yet in the Scripture-sence, *they are not of the World*, but *chosen out of the World*, as our Saviour said of his first Disciples, John 15. 19. And for this reason the World hateth them, *because they are*

not

*not of the World, even as Christ himself was not of the World, John 17. 14. Therefore the World knoweth them not, because it knoweth not God, whose Sons they are, 1 John. 3. 1.*

WHEN Men meddle with points of Divinity, and especially with such a Tender and Weighty Point as this is, touching God's Love to Mankind, they should very carefully observe what words really mean in the Scripture-style, and should form their Notions of things accordingly; not daring to fix upon the great Rule of our Faith a construction of their own, and that too quite contrary to the Sence of the Holy Spirit, as some have taken the Confidence to doe; whether out of Ignorance, or out of Design, or out of Both, God knoweth. Now, not to urge any more places of Scripture to this purpose, those already cited are enough to shew, that in the Sacred Dialect, the World is taken commonly in the softer sence, for Mankind in general; and many times in a severe construction; for those of them who are in the most desperate condition, the more wretched, sinful, and provoking part of mankind: but we never find it used to signifie a Peculiar People, Approved of God, Acceptable to him, or so in Favour with him, as to be elected by him unto Everlasting Glory. And should these

places of Scripture be applied to those who are supposed to be so elected, such consequences would necessarily follow, as to all Rational and Sober men, would appear not onely very Absurd, but very Impious and Horrible also.

To come close then to the matter in hand: When our Saviour said, *God so loved the World*, &c. his plain meaning was, that God's sending his onely begotten Son into the World, was an Act of his Love to the whole Race of *Adam*; to all men, without any exception; not onely to the *Jews*, but to the sinful *Gentiles* also; to all and singular that did, or should live upon the face of the whole Earth; nay, an act of Love even to those who are the Ungodliest of the World, the most Corrupt People, the Greatest Sinners, that are most of all under God's Wrath and Displeasure.

2. SOME may be ready to enquire here, How the God of Purity can be said to Love People that are in such a sad and wretched state? why, this is the Second thing I am to consider; and, before I proceed to the Explication thereof, I must intreat you to observe, that Love and Anger are not at all Inconsistent. Love and Hatred indeed are opposite affections; but  
Love

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Love and Displeasure may go together; and very often there is Kindness, even where there is Indignation. As frail and infirm Beings as we our selves are, we find in our own Nature a mixture of these Dispositions; Thus, a Magistrate is angry with a Malefactor, though at the same time he Pitieth him. A Father is Incensed against an Undutiful Child, though at the same time he Loves him, and for that reason Correcteth, because he bears a Tender and Entire Affection towards him. One Man is highly Displeased with another, and reckons him an Enemy, though at the same time he is Benevolently affected to him, as a Neighbour and a Christian, and is ready to do him any Charitable Offices, as one for whom the Lord *Jesus* was pleased to Die: And if these several Affections thus meet in us, though our Natures are Vitiated and Corrupt, How can it seem incredible, that at the same time Displeasure and Love should come from that Divine Being, who is absolutely Perfect, transcendently Righteous; Infinitely, Necessarily, and Inexhaustibly Good and Merciful? This being premised, that I may now proceed Distinctly and Clearly upon this Subject; I must desire you again to observe that there is a Two-fold Love to be consider'd here; or rather, a Two-fold Degree of Love; and of each

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of these we find in our selves a daily Sense and Experiment. 1. *First*, There is in our Nature, especially when it is smooth'd and softned by Religion, an inclination to do a Man good, consider'd under the notion of a Man; though his actions towards us be such, that he deserves not thereby any kindness at our hands, but rather the contrary. This Divines are wont to call, The Love of Benevolence; a Love that we bear towards all Mankind for common Humanity sake; and an affection which the Laws of *Christ* require us to have even for our bitterest and most implacable Enemies. How provoking soever their Practices be, Works of Mercy and Charity are due to their Nature and Persons; so that we *must bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us*, Matth. 5. 44. 2. *Secondly*, We feel in our Souls an earnest and vehement desire of doing all the Kindest Offices we can possibly to those that Love us again, and that endeavour to oblige, gratifie, and serve us: a very Great and Tender affection, grounded on their Personal Qualities, and Merits, over and above that which they call for, on the account of Common Nature; and this is usually stiled, A Love of Friendship, or Complacency. Now these Two Sorts, or Degrees of Affection, are ascribed unto God, I mean,

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mean, abstracting those Passions and Perturbations of Mind, which are ever incident to us, by reason of the frailty and weakness of our Constitution. That Particular, and most Intense Love, whereof there is some Analogy and Resemblance in the Divine Being, he expresseth onely to those that are very Dear to him, those that Love him, that Serve him with all their Soul, that Keep his Commandments, and that acquire that Noble Character of being his Friends; as *Abraham* was called *the Friend of God*, James 2. 23. And the Blessed *Jesus* said to his Disciples, *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*, John 15. 14. Hence it was, that he told them, That he Loved them, and that the Father himself Loved them, meaning, with a more Peculiar and Ardent Affection: and he told them this Reason for it too, because they *Loved him*, and Believed that *he came out from God*, John 16. 27. For the same reason *St. Paul* saith, Ephel. 5. 25. *That Christ Loved the Church*; that is, those whose hearts are purified by *Faith*, and whose consciences are purged from all *dead Works*, to serve the *Living God*. Those Gracious Dispositions, and moral Perfections, which, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, are formed in all Honest, Humble, and Obedient hearts, are the onely ground of that Love I now speak of,

of, that Great and Abundant Kindness which God extends to such as *perfect holiness in the fear of God*; because such onely are Capable of his Divine and Special Communications; such onely are in a fit condition to Receive them; such onely are meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.

BUT yet there is a Love, which God extendeth unto others also; a Love of Benevolence; a Sincere, True, and Unfeigned Affection, which he beareth even to the Children of Disobedience, although it be not so Extensive and Unmeasurable as that he expresseth to the Children of Light. He is good, and doth good unto every Man; offers happiness unto the very worst of men; desires them to accept of his offers; intends to make them happy upon their hearty acceptance; and doth all things on his part, which are necessary and proper for a merciful God, a Wise and Holy Lawgiver to do for Reasonable and voluntary Agents; so that if they perish after all, their destruction is of themselves. *O that my People had hearkned unto me! that Israel had walked in my ways, Psal. 81. 13. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God? Ezek. 18. 23. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no plea-*



*pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his evil way and live: Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel, Ezek. 33.*

*11. He will have all Men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim.*

*2. 4. He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2 Pet. 3. 9.* These few places of Scripture speak so positively and plainly, that unless men will have the Front to Question the Veracity of God (which is one of his Essential Attributes, necessarily, and naturally included in the Notion of a Deity) they must needs acknowledge, that God loveth all mankind; and every one; though he be the most Irreligious and Profligate amongst them. He hath for all a Love of Benevolence, whereby he wisheth every ones Good, especially his everlasting Happiness. I shall hereafter shew you, how it cometh to pass, that God's wishes have not their due effect: at present my business is to explain the Notion of the Divine Philanthropy; and to make it evident to such as are Teachable, that more or less the God of Mercy and Compassion Loves us all, without Partiality or Discrimination. Though his Affections are of a Scantier Measure, and a Lower Degree to some, who harden their own hearts,

hearts, than they are to others, whose Perswasions and ways please the Lord; yet to all it is a Sincere Affection, Love Unfeigned, Inexpressible, Unconceivable.

WHEN therefore our Blessed Saviour said, *God so loved the World, that he gave his onely begotten Son*; his meaning was, that though of *Adam's* Posterity, some that held the Truth, *held it in Unrighteousness*; others had given themselves up to Lewdness and direct Apostasy; and all were so Corrupt before God, that Divine Vengeance might justly have passed upon all; yet all their Impieties and Provocations notwithstanding, God had so great a Love for all, that of his meer Grace and Goodness he determined to do whatsoever was Needful for, and Becoming him to act, that he might Reclaim them, and bring them into the ways of Righteousness and Peace; and for that end gave *his onely begotten Son*, that *whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

## CHAP. II.

*The Point to be insisted on ; (viz)  
God's unfeigned Love to all Man-  
kind. Proved, First, from the  
Command touching the Universal  
Promulgation of the Gospel.*

**A**ND now the Point which ariseth hence, is this, That the Son of God's coming into the World, was a strong Argument, and an evident Expression of God's sincere and boundless Affection to all Mankind.

**F**OR the clearing of this important Article, there are Two things for me to insist upon.

*First,* The Amplitude of that Commission which was given the Apostles and their Successors, for the Promulgation of the Gospel to all the World.

*Secondly,* The Extensive Merit of our Holy Redeemer's Death.

I. FIRST,

I. F I R S T, The Amplitude of that Commission which was given the Apostles and their Successors, for the Promulgation of the Gospel. The Directions given them when the Lord was ready to depart from them, according to St. *Matthew's* Account, runs thus, *Go ye and Teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have Commanded you : And loe I am with you always, even unto the end of the World, Math. 28. 19, 20.* Though by all Nations here may be meant Primarily all the Tribes of *Israel*, and *Christ's* Purpose might be, that the Apostles should begin their Preaching at *Jerusalem*, and thence Proceed to the *Jews* that were dispersed among the Heathen; yet no Nation under Heaven was to be Excluded; but from Age to Age, and from one Nation to another the Tidings of Peace were to be carried over all the Earth, until the Consummation of all things. Therefore not the Apostles onely, but also their Successors for ever were intended in this Commission, because the Lord's Spiritual Presence and Assistance was to be not for the Apostles time only, but Perpetual, to the very End of the World. Which shews the Universality of  
the

the Divine Grace, and that the Gospel was to be Preached every where before the close of all things, that at the Day of final Account, God may Judge the whole World by Jesus Christ in Righteousness; according as they have obey'd or disobey'd the Gospel sent unto them. Hence the Account St. Mark gives is this, *Go ye into all the World, and Preach the Gospel to every Creature, Mark 16. 15.* to shew, that God's intention was, that no People, no not in the Heavens part of the World, should be passed by, *But that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be Preached in Christ's Name, among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem, as St. Luke hath it, Luk. 24. 47.* Accordingly the Apostles went forth and Preached everywhere, saith St. Mark; meaning, to all People and Nations within their reach; because they were to be Witnesses unto Christ, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in all Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the Earth, saith St. Luke Act. 1. 8. And because God Commanded all Men every where to Repent, saith St. Paul, Act. 17. 30. And were it needful for me to Collect Observations to this purpose, out of the Ancient Writers of the Christian Church, I could shew you particularly, when the Apostles parted Solemnly from one another to Execute their Redeemer's Commission; how they took their particular

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cular Provinces, and went every one into the Country that was assign'd him ; and how those Apostolical Persons, who were engaged in the same weighty Employment; some in the Apostles Days, and many after, all Travell'd into distant places and Territories, that the sound of the Gospel might go forth into all Lands, and that there might be no People, Nation, or Language, but the good News of it should be heard among them. Indeed it was the great End, for which the Miraculous Gift of Tongues was poured out on the Day of Pentecost, and continued for several Years after ; that no means of instructing People in any Nation might be wanting any where.

NOW whence could all this come, but from the Astonishing and Tender Love of God, to a miserable and forlorn World ; and to every Generation of Men that then was, or should be to the World's End ? And what could be the good God's design in all this, but that every one should come to the Knowledge of the Truth, and so be Converted and Live ? It was the End of *John* the Baptist's Preaching, to give Knowledge of Salvation to his People, for the Remission of their Sins, through the Tender Mercy of God, whereby the Day-spring

spring from on high visited them ; to give Light to them that sate in Darkness, and the shadow of Death and to guide their Feet into the Ways of Peace, *Luk. 1. 78, 79.* The same was the end of our Saviour's Preaching, that all People might come unto him, and by him might have Life ; because *God sent not his Son into the World, to Condemn the World ; but that the World through him might be Saved, Jo. 3. 17.* And the very same was the end of the Holy Apostles and their Successors Preaching, that they might Save that which was Lost, and Save all to the uttermost ; Because God's desire was to Bless them, *in turning away every one of them from their Iniquities, Act. 3. 26.* And because *He Commanded all Men every where to Repent, Act. 17. 30.*

AFTER all this, so expressly and plainly told us in the Holy Scripture, for Men to say (as some have had the great Confidence to Publish to the World) That God hath Absolutely, and Irrevocably consigned the greater part of Mankind to Eternal Torments ; that he sendeth his Word to them, that they may be yet more Deaf ; that he sets up a Light before them, that they may be the more Blind ; that he gives them Remedies, that they may refuse to be Healed ; that he knocks at their Hearts, that they

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may deny him Entrance ; and this, that in the end, they may be all Damned, and render'd Inexcusable. These and many other the like bold Assertions, do fix such a foul Imputation upon the Divine Being, and are such an horrible Reproach to his most Glorious Attributes (especially his Goodness, Holyness, Mercy, Justice and Truth) as I almost Tremble but to think of, and can never Wonder sufficiently, how it could enter into the Heads and Hearts of any Christians, to Conceive such Abominable and Blasphemous Notions of God, Blessed for ever more.

*JUSTIN MARTYR* tells us of some Princes, who have been so Salvage, that least Axes and Gibbets should be Idle, they have laid Traps and Snares in Men's Way, on purpose to sport and divert themselves with their Destruction. And among divers base things which have been told of *Tiberius* the Emperor of *Rome*, two barbarous Stories fall here into my Memory. One was, That having a vehement Desire to hang some Virgins (because the *Roman* Government had that Honour for Chastity, that they would not suffer Virgins to die after that Shameful manner) he Order'd the Common Executioner first to Corrupt and Deflow'r them, that then he might



might have them Strangl'd with a *Non-Ob-  
stante* to the Laws. The other Story is,  
That intending to Kill both the Sons of  
*Germanicus*, he used all possible means of  
Provoking them to Defame him, that he  
might have some Colour and Pretence for  
his Villainous Resolution.

MANY such Scandalous Instances there  
have been of Men, who have so far put off  
all Humanity, as to thirst for Blood, and  
to delight in Acts of Cruelty and Op-  
pression. But they have been abhorred  
as so many Botches, and plague Sores a-  
mong Man-kind: And for Men who are  
called by the Name of *Christ*, to repre-  
sent that most Perfect Being, the Father  
of Spirits, and the great Lover of all our  
Souls so, as if he used Arts to draw his  
Poor Creatures into Eternal Perdition, and  
then think to excuse it by a fulsome  
Distinction between God's Secret (as con-  
trary to one another) and his Revealed  
Will. This is such Vileness and Blasphemy,  
as I must beg all good Peoples Pardon for  
Offending their Ears by mentioning it on-  
ly. Indeed it is said that God giveth some a  
Spirit of Slumber; Eyes that they should not  
See, and Ears that they should not Hear.  
But these, and the like Expressions, though  
at the first hearing they sound harsh, yet  
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they do not relate to any Antecedent Decree or Desire, or Work of God ; but are only Declarative of the Event which sometimes falls out accidentally, by the just Judgment of God upon Obstinate People, who harden themselves so, that in the End God gives them up to themselves, so that they become Stupid, Blind and Deaf. But the Original of this is their own Willful Temper and Sinful Courses ; whereby their Hearts wax gross, and their Ears become dull of Hearing, and their Eyes they close themselves by repeated Acts of their own; as if they were afraid, least at any time they should See with their Eyes, and Understand with their Hearts , and should be Converted and Healed. Such Phrases import the Perverseness of some Peoples Minds ; but nothing of any presumed purpose in God, that they should be Eternally Miserable : No, far be that from the Righteous Judge of all the Earth : Let God be True, though all Men are Lyars. Where the Word of God is Preached, and People thereby are called on to Believe and Reform their Lives, the call on God's part is Serious and Unfeigned; and they that Disobey it, will be severely Punisht at the last, for despising the Riches of God's Goodness. We are Embassadors for *Christ* (saith *St. Paul*) as though God did Beseech you by Us; *We pray you*  
*in*

*in Christ's stead, be ye Reconciled to God,*  
 2 Cor. 5. 20. This is the great End of  
 the whole Work of the Ministry, to make  
 Peace between a wronged and good God,  
 and wretched Men; that they may be  
 everlastingly Happy in the Fruition of God;  
 and if this End be not Accomplish'd, Foolish  
 and untoward People have none to blame  
 but themselves. In the Parable of the Sower,  
 the Fault was not in the Seeds-man,  
 nor in the Seed, but in the Stony-ground;  
 it is for want of an Honest and Good  
 Heart, that the Devil and the World pre-  
 vent a Crop. In the Parable of the great  
 Supper, the Epulator was Kind, and the  
 Feast ready, and nothing hinder'd an Happy  
 Meeting, but the Foolish Obstinacy of the  
 Guests that were Invited.

BY these common and familiar Repre-  
 sentations, our Saviour was Pleased ( in  
 Condescension to the weak Capacity of his  
 Hearers ) to shew the Mysteries of God's  
 Kingdom; that God is Essentially, and in  
 his Nature Good; and in his Actions Good,  
 and seeketh to do Good to all the Children  
 of Men: And in order thereunto, sendeth out  
 his good Word into the whole World, and  
 his Good Spirit along with it, that all the  
 Earth may be full of Good People, and of  
 his Glory : That they may be prepared,

and fitted to Participate of his Infinite Goodness and Glory in another Life : And if after all this, any come short of that Glory of God, and of their own Happyness, that they may have no reason to accuse any, but their own Perverse and Wicked Selves. This is the real way of leaving all Men without Excuse : They are not Inexcusable, for not doing things which are out of their Power ; or for being Miserable when they cannot avoid it, for Impossibilities would excuse all Mankind. But this renders Wicked People Inexcusable, that Salvation is Tender'd them, and means given them of attaining to it, and they willfully neglect the things which belong unto their Peace. This is the Condemnation, *That Light is come into the World, and Men love Darknes rather, because their Deeds are Evil*, Joh. 3. 19.

AGAINST all this which hath been said, to prove the Universality of God's Love to Mankind, from the Universality of that Grace, which hath been exhibited to the World, by the Preaching of the Gospel every where, I foresee it may be Objected,

THAT the Gospel is not yet Publish'd to the whole World.

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ARE there not divers parts of the Earth that are yet Undiscover'd? And in those we know, or have heard of, are there not multitudes of Blind and Idolatrous poor Wretches, without any Footsteps of Christianity among them? And if so, how then was the coming of *Christ* an Argument and Expression of God's Unfeigned Love to them; and especially to those their Ancestors, who since *Christ's* time have Dyed in a State of invincible Infidelity?

TO this I presume to say 'these four things.

i. FIRST, That it is impossible for Us now, to tell where the Gospel hath not been Preached: And consequently, it is not a certain Principle, that neither any of the Apostles, nor yet any of their Successors, Publish'd it in those Countries, which are unknown to us at this distance; or in others which are known to be addicted still to Heathenish Idolatries and Superstition. How probable soever Mens Conjectures may be, 'tis impossible for them in this, as in other Cases, to prove a Negative.

2. SECONDLY, Nor can we tell but that in those Regions of the World which are now Infidels, the Christian Faith hath been formerly rejected upon the Preaching of it. Nothing is so contrary to the Perswasions, Customs, and Vices of Heathens, as the *Christian Religion*; and therefore it is no Wonder if it hath not been Received by People every where. The *Gergesens* desired *Christ* himself to depart out of their Coasts. *He came unto his Own, and his Own Received him not*; and so it is no Wonder, if his Disciples found ill Usage at the Hands of Strangers. When he sent them out, he foresaw that they would not find the Sons of Peace every where; and therefore he Commanded them to leave Obstinate People, and to shake off the Dust of their Feet, as a Testimony against them. *St. Paul* told some of the *Jews*, that they put the Word of God from them, and Judged themselves unworthy of Eternal Life; *And for that Reason that he would turn to the Gentiles, Acts 13. 46.* Nor were all among the *Gentiles* disposed to Believe: Though the Apostles had generally better success among them, than among the *Jews*; yet among some of those too, they met with unconquerable Opposition.

3. THIRDLY,

3. **T H I R D L Y**, Suppose some, whose Office it was to propagate the Faith, were wanting to some People; either through Carelessness, or for fear of Death and Persecution: This doth not Argue any want of Love in God, whose Intentions were, that all Men should come to the knowledge of the Truth; and whose Commands were, that the Gospel should be Preach'd to every Creature.

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**CHAR.**

## CHAP. III.

*Proved Secondly, from the Universality of that Redemption, which was Purchased by our Saviour's Death.*

**H**AVING thus Proved the Universal Love of God towards Mankind, from the Amplitude of that Commission which *Christ* gave his Apostles, and their Successors, to Publish the Gospel Universally, I proceed now to a farther Demonstration of it, from the Consideration of the Extensive Merit of our Blessed Saviour's Death.

AS to this Matter, I think fit to premise these two preliminary Observations.

I. **FIRST**, That the Doctrine of our Universal Redemption by the Blood of *Christ*, is Deliver'd in the Holy Scripture, in as plain, and as clear Terms, as could possibly have been used. Supposing the  
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the Doctrine were Unquestionably True ; nay, as fully in as few Words as could have been Wish'd, had Mankind been Empow'r'd to have Penn'd the Doctrine themselves for their own Satisfaction.

HERE the Lord Jesus himself saith, *God so Loved the World, that he gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life, Joh. 3. 16.* And elsewhere it is said, *That God will have all Men to be Saved, 1 Tim. 2. 4. That Christ gave himself a Ransom for all, v. 6. That He is the Saviour of all Men, especially of those that Believe, 1 Tim. 4. 10. That he Tasted Death for every Man, Heb. 2. 9. That he was Deliver'd up for us All, Rom. 8. 32. And that he is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for our Sins only, but also for the Sins of the whole World, 1 Joh. 2. 2.* These Expressions are Clear and Open to the Sence of every one in the World; nor is any Article of our Faith, Deliver'd in Terms that are freer from Ambiguity, or less liable to doubtful meanings, than these are. The very Being of God, though the Belief of it be the Foundation of all Religion; yet it is no where more clearly Taught, nor I think, of sett Purpose so often, and so Expressly Inculcated, as this Principle is. For the Holy Scriptures

Scriptures suppose God's Being ; and tho' they be full of Declarations and Proofs of God's Attributes, his Singularity, Omniscience, Immutability, Mercy, Justice, and the like Divine Perfections ; yet his Existence and Being, Consider'd Abstractedly from his other Infinite Glories, is no where (to my Remembrance) so Expressly, Openly, Directly and Frequently Proposed to our Belief, as this Truth is, *That he gave his Son to die for all Men.*

2. SECONDL Y, It is Observable, That in those Places of Scripture I have now Cited, this Principle is laid down as the Ground-work, Motive, and Reason of some Important Duty, wherein all Mankind are concerned. Our Saviour's Words, about God's Love to the World, were intended to Invite and Encourage all People to come unto Him, and to Believe on Him. In the next place, it is used as a strong Argument for Supplications Prayers, Intercessions and giving of Thanks to be made for all Men. Then it is laid down as a sure Ground for our Trusting in the Living God, notwithstanding all Labouring, and suffering Reproach. Next, it is mentioned as the great Reason of our Universal Obedience to *Christ*, considering the High Dignity of his Person ; though in his state of Exinanition, he was made

made lower than the Angels, that he might be in a Capacity to taste Death for every Man. Next, it is proposed as the great Motive for our Patience and Perseverance, and confident Hope in God, amidst all our Tryals in this World. And then it is used as a very powerful Reason to Encourage us all, to Amend our Lives in case we have Heinously Sinned; or to depend upon *Christ's* Merit and Intercession, for the Pardon of all our Transgressions.

THESE two observable things being thoroughly well consider'd, are enough to make all Thoughtful and Teachable Men, afraid of contradicting a Principle so very clear in itself, and of such vast importance and concernment in its Use. After these Manifest and Express Declarations over and over, touching the Universal Extent of the Merit of *Christ's* Death, to make a Monopoly of it, for the Benefit of a *Few* only; leaving all the Residue of Mankind, under an absolute inevitable Necessity of Perishing for ever. What is this, but to give the Holy Scripture the Lye, and to shake the Minds of People in the Practice of their Duties; nay, to Deterr them from the practice of Religion, by Ruining and Digging up the very Foundation, which was designedly laid for the Building up of all Men

Men in Faith and Holiness, and to Support the whole Fabrick of Piety and Vertue.

**BUT** there are some particular Passages, which serve to Demonstrate and Confirm the Point in Hand, beyond (one would think) all possibility of Cavil; and therefore I shall insist upon those, after a more Copious rate, omitting many others, which if Critically Enumerated, would presently swell into a great Heap.

**AND** the first shall be the Words of St. *John*, which indeed I mentioned before, but have not distinctly consider'd; where he tells us positively, *That Christ is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for our Sins only, but also for the Sins of the whole World, 1 Jo. 2.*  
 2. There is no question, but when he saith, *Christ is the Propitiation for our Sins*, he means his own Sins, and the Sins of others who Professed Christianity with him. In the first verse, he calls them, *His little Children*, which cannot but signifie Believers. And if we may pretend to guess at God's Elect, we have Reason to think, both the Apostle and those he there Wrote to, to have been of that Blessed Number; and that St. *John* thought so too, by the Account

count he gives of himself, *And then truly* (saith he) *our Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, cap. 1. 3.* And again, *I Write unto you little Children, because your Sins are forgiven you for his Names sake, v. 12.* Much more to the same purpose he saith afterwards, *That they had overcome the Wicked one: That they had known the Father: That the Word of God did abide in them: That they had an Unction from the Holy one: That they were the Sons of God: That they had passed from Death to Life.* And divers other such Characters he gives of them, whereby we may easily perceive that St. John looked upon them to be in a State of Salvation. And whosoever Reads his Epistles throughout, will find Reason enough by the strain of them, to believe that the Divine Apostle, thought his own Salvation very secure: Now in that speaking in his own Person, and in the Person of other Faithful Christians, he affirmeth, *Christ to be the Propitiation, not for their Sins only, but also for the Sins of the whole World:* He must be understood to mean the whole World of *Infidels*, for there lies the Antithesis. And the whole World being distinguished into two great Divisions, the Sheep and the Goats, those who are the Sons of God, and those who are not; and *Christ* being said to be the Propitiation for

for all, we must conclude, that he died for more than are supposed to be Predestinated to Eternal Life; or else I cannot conceive, to what purpose St. *John* spoke those Words, or what Truth or Sence they can bear, if he died for Believers only. To say, he is the Propitiation also for the sins of the whole World (if it were not so) would have been Superfluous and False; and therefore this single Text should put it out of Controversie, *That he died for all Mankind*: He Paid on his part a Ransom for All; he made on his part an Atonement for All; so that all were Deliver'd from a Necessity of Perishing, all were put anew into a possibility and capacity of being happy for ever. And if after all this, some will not lay hold on the Blood of *Christ*, by a free and lively Faith, nor perform the Terms of a New-Covenant of Grace, which was Sealed by the Blood of *Christ*, but will trample under foot the Blood of the Son of God; this is no diminution to its infinite Valour, nor to his Act and Intention, but an Aggravation of their Guilt, who were put by him into a good Condition, and might have been Eternally Saved; had they not been wanting on their own part to themselves, by willfully neglecting so great Salvation. This is a Plain, Easie, and Natural Account of St. *John's* meaning: And to the same Effect, though in other

other Words St. Paul tells us, *That Christ is the Saviour of all Men, especially of those that Believe,* 1 Tim. 4. 10. This Assertion could not be True, nor the Distinction Needful, or to any purpose, were he not the Saviour of them that Believe not. Why should the Apostle come off, with an especially of those that believe, if *Christ* did not his part to Save all in general, the whole Race of Mankind? He might have said, who is the Saviour of the Elect, and no more, if no more had been in *Christ's* Eye and Heart: His saying especially, doth not Limit, or Restrain the Merits of his Death to Believers; but only restrains the Application of his Merits to them, through the fault of others, who make his Blood of no effect to them, by being Unbelievers. It shews, that they exclude themselves from having that Benefit by his Death, which he purchased for All, and intended for All, if they would Believe and Repent: None were passed by, by any absolute Decree of God, or for want of Affection in the Son of God; he died for every Man with a Sincere purpose, and upon Condition, that every one would lay hold on his Cross, and cleanse himself from all Filthiness, by the Blood of Sprinkling. Upon that Account, he is the Saviour of all Men, and the propitiation for the Sins of the whole World,

as to Merit and Intention: But because all do not come unto him after all, but continue still in a State of Wickedness and Infidelity ; therefore as to Efficacy, he is not so much their Saviour, as he is others ; to all intents and purposes, he is a Propitiation and Saviour, especially to Believers.

2. SECONDL Y, For the farther Confirmation of this Point, let us hear St. Paul, 1 Tim. 1. 15. *This is a Faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to Save Sinners.* The stress of my Argument hence lyeth here, that the Doctrine of our Redemption by *Christ*, is a most comfortable Doctrine: Not only a Truth, but a most acceptable Truth: a Principle that sufficiently recommends it self to every Man, and Deserves to be Received by every one in the World, for the inestimable Consolation it carryeth along with it. Now this necessarily implies, and proves, That *Christ* came into the World, to make every Sinner in it, capable of Salvation in a better World, because this is the onely substantial ground of that Comfort I speak of ; the only Principle, whence we can with Reason, gather that Satisfaction, which makes the Doctrine of our Redemption, worthy to be Accepted by us all. A Man's Soul had need have



have all possible satisfaction, touching the Reasonableness of his Hopes; especially, when he prepares himself for important Offices of Religion, or is about to Die: Then it stands in need of a solid and sure bottom to support it, and give it rest; nor do I see any other such grounds for reasonable satisfaction, and the Comforts of a Man, as this great Truth, *That Christ Died for the good of all Mankind*. Though some are ready to flee to God's Decrees for succour, and to Cherish themselves with a confident perswasion, that they were Elect-ed to Salvation from Everlasting; yet this is no sure Foundation to build on: 'Tis unreasonable to take Sanctuary there, and to fly for Refuge, to the secret Counsels of God's Will. This is the Work of Fancy, and strong Imagination; and many People may be willing to work themselves into it, partly out of a principle of spiritual Pride, and partly to quiet an evil Conscience, and heal some inward sores, which a Vicious Life hath made: Nor are any so ready to run to God's Decrees, as immoral People, whose Sins pursue them with a great Cry. Alas! it is impossible for any of us, without immediate Revelation (which is not afforded now) to Read our Names in the Book of Eternity, or to know Infallibly that they are there; those secret things belong

unto the Lord our God ; by us they are Unsearchable, and past finding out, and therefore we cannot gather any reasonable Comforts that Way.

NOR Indeed doth the Revealed Will of God (the Holy Scriptures themselves) afford us much, without that most acceptable Doctrine, which I am now defending: For neither in this Book can any of us find our Names Written, no more than in the Volum of God's Decrees. The Scripture is silent asto the state of particular Persons, and all the Comfort any single Man can gather from it, comes by making reasonable conclusions as to himself, out of general Premises. There are in the Bible many necessary Laws prescribed, and many excellent promises given to the Faithful, indefinitely and at large, and when a particular person compares his private state with the common Rule, and upon a due comparison discovers, that according to his Power, he hath sincerely and honestly observed God's Commands, or doth now do so, and resolves stedfastly by God's Grace to persevere to the end in so doing ; he may then very reasonably Hope, and Cherish himself with an Humble Modest Confidence, that he shall be Happy. Yet all this is upon a supposition, that *Christ* Died for him,

him, for if *Christ* be not a propitiation for his Sins, such a Man is lost and utterly undone, notwithstanding all his performances. And how I pray, can any particular Man be reasonably assur'd of that, but by being assur'd first, *That Christ tasted Death for every Man*; This general Truth being believed, *That Christ was a Sacrifice for all Mankind*; and for the whole World, it is easy and necessary for that particular Person to conclude, *That Christ was a Sacrifice even for him*; because he is one of Mankind, and a part of the World: But without this most Acceptable Principle, I cannot see with what Reason and Comfort he can conclude for himself; the Scripture tells him nothing of that, as to his own particular, all that he hath reasonably to rely on is, *That the Son of God Died for all*. Take away this Principle, and farewell all Faith, all Obedience, all hope and comfort with it; I mean, all solid Reason of Hope and Comfort: Fancy and Imagination there may be in this Case too; but I speak now of Rational Convictions and Rational Consolation; all that must depend upon this bottom and foundation, that *Christ* came into the World to Die, and offer himself up for every Child of Man. This makes the Doctrine of our Redemption, a most Acceptable Doctrine indeed; a most Comfortable Saying, worthy of all

Men to be received; whereas without this Latitude, and as some People are willing through the pride of their Hearts to understand it, 'tis so far from being Acceptable unto all Men, that it seemeth a very Frightful Doctrine. For if the Son of God Died not for all Men to the utmost extent, though he had past by but One in the whole World, and had excluded but One from having any Benefit by the propitiation upon the Cross; that one Person being not Known nor Mentioned, how could any one of us all tell, but he was that Person? I might have been fearful it was my self, another might have been (though with less Reason) as fearful as I; a third, as fearful too, a fourth, as fearful as the rest; and so on *ad infinitum*: For every one in the World might have thought himself equally concern'd to Fear, and consequently to Despair as well as another: Every one would have been in suspence and perplexity, at least, as People that are forced to draw Lots for their Lives, not knowing how the chance would fall out, till the Day of Judgment. To be sure, this Tormenting Doubt, would be incident to all People of scrupulous Minds, and great numbers of very Pious People are such; and then what would become of *Christianity*? Considering the Hereditary Weakness of our Nature,  
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the many Actual Sins we are Guilty of, and how unworthy the very best are of eternal Happiness; what Heart or Encouragement would any one have, to undertake or persevere in Religion; if *Christ*, by passing any one by, had put every one thus under Fears and Dangers, of being Cast-aways at last? This would have served to spoil the whole Work of Redemption, and to have damp'd the Faith of all; at least it would have brought on such a Faith, as *St. James* speaks of in those most Miserable Spirits, who Believe and Tremble.

I have insisted upon this Argument the longer, to shew you of what great Consequence this Point is, and what weighty Reasons we have to inculcate and urge the Belief of it: The Interest of *Christ's* Religion, and the Peace of every Christian's Mind depends upon it; for which cause, the *Catholick Church* of *Christ*, hath maintained it from the Beginning, to encourage all Men in the Ways of Holiness and Vertue to the last. And for the same cause, our own Church holds it, and holds it out unto all; Teaching even her young Catechumens to Believe that *Christ* hath Redeemed every one of them, and all Mankind; to encourage them to all cheerful Obedience to his Laws, who out of entire

Affection to their Souls, Died for them all; and Teaching all her Children about the Altar, also to profess in the Prayer of Consecration, that *Jesus Christ* made upon the Cross (by his own Oblation of himself once offer'd) a Full, Perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice; Oblation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World; to fill all their Minds at that great Solemnity, with Faith, and Hope, and Comfort, and modest Assurance of finding Favour and Acceptance with God, for his most meritorious Blood and Death's Sake.

S O that, it is not out of a Fondness of an Opinion that we Preach this Doctrine to you, though it be True; but for the sake of a most comfortable Truth also; a Truth, that you are deeply concern'd for your own good to Believe; a Truth worthy of all Acceptation, because 'tis a sure and solid bottom for your minds to rest on, which yet it could not be, if *Christ* Died not for every Individual Soul; and therefore when St. Paul said, *This is a Faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation; Or, Worthy of all Men to be Received, That Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners*; he must be understood to mean all Sinners, every poor Sinful Man and Woman, without Exception.

3. THIRDLY.

3. **THIRDLY**, If all that hath been hitherto Spoken, be not yet enough, to prove the Universality of our Redemption, I appeal in the third place to those two Apostles, St. Paul and St. Peter, who jointly believed, *That the Son of God Died, even for those that Perish*. In Rom. 14. Where he disputes against putting a stumbling-block in anothers way, he gives this strict caution, *Destroy not him with thy Meat, for whom Christ Died*, v. 15. And so, 1 Cor. 8. 11. Where St. Paul discourseth upon the same subject, he argues to the same effect, *Through thy Knowledge, shall the weak Brother Perish, for whom Christ died*? You see our Saviour's Love to all mankind is taken notice of, as a powerful Argument, to excite our Charity to one another; that we should not *use any means to Destroy, whom Christ came to Rescue from Destruction*; that we should do our part to save them, by our *Inoffensive and Exemplary Conversation, because Christ did his part, to save them by his own Death*. This plainly shews the Apostles judgment, that though the Lord Jesus Died for all, yet some of them *might*, and in probability *will* perish notwithstanding; especially if others be so scandalously Wicked, as to lend them a helping Hand. If there be no fear of their Damnation, St. Paul's  
Reasons

Reasoning would be vain and impertinent, and if *Christ* Died not for such as are in a Perishing Condition, *St. Paul's* Principle would be False. After all this, shall any dare to say, That *Christ* Died for the Elect onely? Why, let us observe, what *St. Peter* saith to the like purpose, 2 *Pet.* 2. 1. *There were false Prophets among the People, (of old) even as there will be false Teachers among you, who will privily bring in Damnable Heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift Destruction.* These do well deserve the Name of Reprobates and Sons of Perdition, because they bring upon themselves swift Destruction, by introducing damnable Heresies, and even denying the Lord; and yet the Scripture saith manifestly and expressly, *That the Lord bought them*; that is, paid a Ransome, a price of Redemption for them.

NOW to evade the force of all this, some take the great boldness to tell us, That *Christ* bought All men, and died for All men, not Intentionally, but Sufficiently only, meaning That his Blood and Merits were enough, and sufficient for All, but He did not intend, that some should have any benefit at all, by his meritorious Passion. This is an Argument of great depravation of Nature, that rather than part  
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with beloved Opinions, men will choofe to put the moft absurd conſtruction upon the Scripture, and make it ſpeak what they pleaſe in favour of them, though they make it ſpeak contradictions. *Chriſt bought thoſe that deny him*, ſaith the Text: He never intended to buy them (ſay they) though he had Blood ſufficient, yet he had not the Will; and yet nevertheless, he was their Redeemer: Which is the ſame thing, as if they ſhould ſay, He did buy them, and He did not; wherein there is a double contradiction, one of the Holy Scripture, and another of themſelves. An Act of Grace done by one voluntary Agent for another, doth neceſſarily include an Intention, or elſe it is not an Act of Grace. When 'tis ſaid, *Joh. 15. 13. Greater Love bath no Man than this, for a Man to lay down his Life for his Friends*: Where lies the greatneſs of ſuch Love, but in laying down ones Life with an intention to ſerve ones Friends? With a deſign and purpoſe to help them; nay, with a ſincere and vehement Deſire to do them all the Good he can? And in uſing that Compariſon, our Saviour's meaning was to inſinuate the ſingular Greatneſs of his own Love; in laying down his Life, not for Friends onely, but for Enemies; with a purpoſe and deſign, to do thoſe very Men good, that are Enemies to God, to Him, and

and to their own Souls also ; that will bring upon themselves swift Destruction. How can He be said to have bought them, if He laid not down a price for them, with an intention and purpose to deliver them out of the jaws of the Devil ? If an Agent in *Turkey* deposite a sum large enough to purchase a Thousand Slaves out of the Hands of Infidels, but yet intends it for the Benefit of Two onely, and Ransometh but Two, where is his kindness to the rest ? Or, how can he be said to have bought the rest ? All that can be said is, That it was in his Power to have Ransomed All, but he did not ; and therefore did it not, because he did not design to Rescue them. If a Testator gives a Fund sufficient to pay all the Debts of a Multitude of Prisoners, and yet Limits all his Charity to the Use of One, and for the Deliverance of One onely ; where is his Charity to the Common Good ? The great Numbers that remain still in Durance and Bond, cannot call him their Redeemer, who had Abilities enough to have Redeemed them, but did not Discharge them, nor ever had it in his Heart or Thoughts. If a Person of very plentiful Fortunes, sufficient to Relieve a whole City in time of Famine ; shall bestow all his Kindness upon a small Hospital, leaving the Neighbourhood round about to Starve and

and Perish; where is his Compassion to them? How did he Relieve and Succour them? And how Ridiculous would it not be to pretend, that he Fed all, and Provided for all that were Hungry, because he had enough to have done it if he would; enough and to spare, and yet would not vouchsafe so many Perishing Souls, so much as the Crumbs that fell from his Table? To instance in these plain Cases, is enough to clear the Point under our present Consideration. The Scripture tells us positively, *That Christ Died to give himself a Ransome for all, and that he bought even those that deny him, and bring upon themselves swift Destruction*: Therefore he intended on his part, that all the very worst of Men, should be put into a Capacity of receiving Benefit by his Blood. If this was not his design, nor his Bloodshed to that purpose, he cannot with Truth be said to have Bought, and Died for them, which yet the Scripture expressly affirmeth: A Sufficiency of Merits, is not enough to denominate him every Man's Redeemer: That Sufficiency must have been given on his part, and that too with an intent, That it should be a Ransom for every Man; otherwise we may say, by parity of Reason, that he was the Redeemer also of the Devils themselves; because there was a Sufficiency as to that too: His Me-  
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rits were so Infinite, by reason of the Infinite Dignity of his Person, that they would have served them too, had God been pleased to accept of the Ransom, and had *Christ* intended to lay it down for them. In short, unless we will shake the very Principles of Piety, and offer direct Violence to Truth and common Reason, we cannot deny any People room in our Saviour's Heart; or shut them out of his kind purposes and wishes; or think them deprived, by a fatal antecedent Decree, of the means and hope of Peace: The Opinion is so repugnant to the Notion of the Divine Goodness and Clemency, and so contrary to the Express Word of God, and so inconsistent with that great Love of *Christ*, that abundance of Grace, that Tenderneſs of Mercy, those Riches of Goodness, and Bowels of Compassion, which appeared so gloriously throughout the Work of our Redemption.

4. FOURTHLY, But there is one Text of Scripture more, which I have reserved for my last Argument, because it carryeth such a clear light with it, as is enough to strike any Eyes that are but open to receive it. It is the Principle supposed by *St. Paul*, as a Truth acknowledg'd, and taken for granted by all Faithful *Christians*, then 2 Cor. 5

4. we thus judge, *That if one died for all, then were all dead.* Where the Apostle's purpose is to shew the whole World, how strictly they were concern'd, to make the Lord *Jesus* a return of the most Ardent and Operative Affections, from the consideration of that miserable and lost Condition, whereinto the whole World (without exception) had fallen; and wherein the whole World must have continued, had not *Christ* come to offer up his Soul for them. All were Dead, that is, in a deadly, forlorn, and undone Condition; all were concluded under Sin. The Medium to prove this Universal Ruine, is taken from the Universality of the Redemption of the World: All were Dead, because One Died for All; which shews, that *Christ* Tasted Death for as many as were lost, for as many as needed a propitiation to restore them to Life and Happyness; otherwise the Argument would have been altogether short and inconclusive, if *Christ* had made an Atonement for God's Elect only. If one Died for a few, this indeed would have proved, that those few were in a lost Condition; but how would it have follow'd hence, that therefore all were Dead? Rather it would have follow'd, that all were not Dead, nor stood in need of a Redeemer, if one had not Died for the Redemption of all Mankind.

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FROM all these premises, the Truth of the point I proposed to consider, will (I hope) evidently appear to those, whose Minds are not quite Captivated to an Opinion ; that the coming of the Son of God, into the World, was a strong Argument, and a plain Expression of God's Sincere and boundless Affection to the Children of Men. Those means which are necessary for Reasonable and Voluntary Creatures, in order to their Happiness, the Father of Lights, hath of his own good Pleasure and Grace afforded Mankind in such abundant measure, that if any People Perish, the fault must be in themselves. *Christ's* descending from Heaven, was to declare those Truths, which could not be discover'd, or made known, without Divine Revelation. His Cloathing himself with Humane Flesh was, that he might the better Converse with us, and Transact the Office of a Mediator, and be in a suitable Condition to Die at last for us. His Holy Life and Heavenly Doctrines, were to direct our Feet into the Ways of Peace, that he might be, not onely the Glory of his People *Israel*, but a Light to Lighten the whole *Gentile* World. His Miracles were to shew the greatness of his Person, and his Divine Authority, that he might be relied on as the  
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sure Hope of all the ends of the Earth. His Blood that was shed by his most bitter and dolorous Passion, was to speak far better things than the Blood of *Abel*, or of all *Abel's* Sacrifices. It was the Blood of Atonement to make Peace between an offended God, and a wicked World; to procure Remission of all Sins that were past, to deliver Mankind from a necessity of Perishing; and to open the ways of Mercy, to all that would desire to enter into the Kingdom of God: It was the Blood of the New Covenant, that was confirmed upon the Cross, to ascertain People of all God's Promises in it, on condition of Faith, on their Part, and of Obedience to God's Laws for the future. It was the Blood of Sprinkling, to cleanse us from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, to Purifie unto *Christ* a peculiar People, Zealous of good Works. Besides these means of Grace and Salvation now mentioned, God was pleas'd of his abundant Mercy, to add divers more, after our Lord's Ascension, for the particular Application of his Son's Merits to the Soul of every Believer; that the Blood of *Christ* might not be shed in vain, like water spilt upon the Ground: Great was the Company of Preachers, whose business was to Publish the Gospel to every Creature, to proclaim the Terms of the New-covenant; to shew the necessity of repentance

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for the compleat and actual remission of sins; and to invite all Nations to turn unto the Lord, to perswade them to seek and flie unto him, and to gather up those Mercies, which he had purchas'd for all. And so the descent of the Holy Ghost was, not only to strengthen the Apostles and their Fellow-labourers, for the Discharge of their great and most Charitable Office, but to enable all those to whom they should Preach, to receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save their Souls. His Gracious and Kindly Operations, are to enlighten our understandings, to help our Infirmities, to subdue our wild and unruly Affections, to confirm our Hopes, to rectifie our Wills in such a Moral Way, as is suitable to voluntary Agents, and to induce our corrupt Natures with a supernatural Principle of Grace, for the performance of those Duties which God now requires, in such a measure as God will accept of. Thus from the beginning to the end of God's Oeconomy, there is nothing on his part but Love, Love Unspeakable, Love Unfeigned; and after all these various and astonishing expressions of it to us all, for any of us to Revile that most Holy and Beneficent Being, as the cause of Men's Sins, as the Author of Men's Damnation, as the hater and destroyer of Men's Souls, by pretended, absolute



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solute, and irresistible Decrees, this is such a complication of Blasphemy, Ingratitude, and other horrible Wickedness, as would need another Sacrifice, if that already offer'd upon the Cross, were not of Infinite Value.

WERE Men possess with a true Sense of God's Love, and his Works for us, methinks nothing more would be needful to endear Religion to us, and to engage us to Piety, Charity, and Holiness of Life: Such a mighty influence would that Sense have over every one of our Souls, to stir us up to every thing that is pure, lovely, and good. And in order to it (that I may now proceed to the more practical part of this Discourse) give me leave to lay before you, these six following Directions,

*First*, That you be careful to entertain in your Minds Genuine Apprehensions of God.

*Secondly*, That you do not Judge of God's Love by the Event of things.

*Thirdly*, That you do not measure his purpose (as to things Eternal) by his present Acts of Providence, in dispensing some special Favours here.

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*Fourthly*

*Fourthly*, That you do not think Uncharitably of others, upon a presumption, that you your selves are of the number of God's Elect.

*Fifthly*, That you diligently perform those things which are necessary, in order to the final participation of God's Love.

*Sixthly and Lastly*, That you endeavour to make God all possible returns of Affection.

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CHAP. IV.

*Six Practical Inferences from this Point. First, That we should have Genuine Notions of God; and what Notions are such.*

First, **T**HAT you be careful to entertain in your Minds, Genuine Apprehensions of God: That Wise and Vertuous Heathen, *Plutarch*, in his Book of *Superstition* shews, That though the Fancy of an *Atheist* be a very false and foul imagination, and an Argument of extreme blindness of Mind; yet such a one is in a better case than he, who believing the Existence of God, takes him nevertheless for a Frightful, Hurtful, Tyrannical Cruel and Savage Being: And he draws a Parallel from himself: 'I had (said he) much rather People should Report, that there never was such a Man living as *Plutarch*, than that *Plutarch* was an inconstant and fickle

‘Man, addicted to Anger, Revengeful upon every slight occasion, moved out of himself by little Provocations, or apt (for ordinary disrespect) to behave himself like an outrageous and unmerciful Creature. To imagine there is no God, is to Disbelieve; to conceive hard and unworthy Notions of God, is to Slander and Reproach him. I call those hard and unworthy Notions of God, which are unsuitable to the Perfections of so excellent a Being; so Glorious for the infinite Goodness, Rectitude, and Beauties of his Nature. He is absolutely perfect in himself; the Supream, Chiefest, and purest Good; without the least mixture of any thing that is a stain to perfection; or a Debasement and Diminution of it: This is Essential to the Deity, and necessarily included in the Notion of God. And as he is the most perfect Being in his own Nature, so is he too the cause and spring whence all those Perfections are derived, which are in any degree remarkable in his Creatures; especially of those Perfections, whereby all Rational Beings, Angels and Men, excell the rest; whatever Excellencies are in these, according to the measure of their Capacities, we must suppose to be in God in the highest degree; because it is unconceivable how he can communicate that to others, which he himself hath

hath not. Therefore in framing our Idea's of God, we must abstract and lay aside all Conceptions which include Defect, or any thing that is a Disparagement to Excellency: Though it be impossible for us, poor Finite Creatures, to have Adequate Notions of that Infinite Being, or to Understand and Know him fully as he is; especially while we our selves are in this Mortal State: Yet this is the best way of raising our Minds to the clearest and truest Apprehensions of him, by ascribing to him, all that Argues true Excellency and Perfection; and by separating from our Conceptions of him, whatever serves, or seems to Degrade, Lower, and Vilifie a most perfect Being. And to hit this matter rightly, we should observe what is Vile in our selves, Defective, and Reproachful in our own Nature, and be sure to remove and throw away all that from our Conceptions of God. For though God hath given us divers excellent Faculties, yet in each of these there is something, that doth Deprave, Vitiare, and is a Blemish to it. In our Understanding there is much Darkness; In our Wills there is an Averseness to follow Reason, many times, though it be clear; a crookedness that makes us stand awry, and hold off from that which is Good; And in the lowest Faculty of the Soul, there are many Passi-

ons and Affections, which most of all Argue Defect in us, and are the greatest Disparagement and Stain to Humane Nature: Therefore they are called Vices, because they are a Blemish and Pollution to that Spiritual Being the Soul; and so great a Blemish, that the foulness of them is discoverable, by the ordinary Light of Nature. Frowardness, Rage, Malice, Spitefulness, Lying, Insincerity, Cruelty, Crossness of Temper, Love of Mischief, and the Pleasure some take in Oppressing, Hurting, Ruining, Poor People; and many times too, when there is no other Reason for such Barbarous Actions, but onely the Fierceness and Violence of a Blind Passion: These are very ugly things, and such as appear very ugly in the Eyes of Heathens themselves: They Argue great Defect and Corruption in Humane Nature; and are a Disgrace to it; They are the Efforts of Base Minds, and Signs of a very Scurvy Temper; Actions that Proceed from very Degenerate Spirits, and evil Hearts; and such as are hateful to all Men, whose Natures are at all Refin'd and Improv'd. These Qualities therefore being so inconsistent with all Excellency, and so diametrically opposite to Perfection, we may be sure, they cannot be in God; nor can any thing like them have room in his Divine and Super-excellent Nature. To  
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represent that most Glorious Being as one, that from Eternity disposed of Men's Lots, without any Consideration or Foresight of their Actions, as one that made Mankind with a stedfast Resolution to Damn the Generality of them; or at least, took Advantage by one Man's Sin, to consign the greatest part of his Posterity to Everlasting Torments; To represent him, as one that seeks to compass his Design, by not onely Permitting, but Assisting Men to Transgress his Holy Laws; as one that bids them Obey, and Swear he desires they should Obey his Commands, and yet by his Secret Will, would not have them do it; As one that Denies, when he seems to offer them the Means of Obeying, refuseth to help their Weakness, and yet Punisheth them for not accepting his Help: To represent him as one, that thus colludes and deals hardly with his Poor Creatures; and all this, that in the end, he may shew his great Power over them, and satisfy his own absolute and irresistible Will, and to please himself with their Everlasting, Unspeakable Torments; This is to Degrade God beneath his most perfect Self, to make him equal (if not exceed) the most Barbarous Tempers; to extinguish his Glory, to throw upon him the very dregs and filth which the worst Natur'd Man is capable of; and to destroy those Di-

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vine Attributes, which are the Lustre and Excellency of the Deity. *God is Love*, saith the Apostle ; and the Genuine Notion of his Love is, that he is ready to do his Necessitous Creatures (and especially the Precious Souls of Men) all the Good they need. The Genuine Notion of his Justice is, that he evermore Acteth Righteously, according to the Rules of Eternal Reason ; Rewarding every Man as his Works are, whether Good or Evil. The Genuine Notion of his Truth is, that his Words are agreeable with his Purpose and Mind ; that he cannot Lye or Dissemble, because it is Repugnant to the Excellence of his Nature. The Genuine Notion of his Power is, that he can do whatever doth not involve a Contradiction, nor Argueth Evil or Imperfection in the Agent. The Genuine Notion of his Goodness is, that he is inclined to provide all the means that are necessary, or becoming him to provide for the Welfare of his whole Creation, according to the Capacities and Faculties of every part of it. The Genuine Notion of his Mercy is, that he is Compassionate, Benign, and Patient towards the most undeserving Men ; though by their own Faults they are Sinful, and Enemies to their own Souls. These are the Glories of his Essence, Attributes which adorn his Nature, and which shew him



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him to be the most Perfect and Excellent of all Beings. Therefore in forming our Notions and Conceptions of God, we must be sure to have a constant Eye, and a tender Regard, to these his adorable Perfections, and Construe his Works with Respect to them; especially the Works of his Love, which is the Attribute he seemeth particularly delighted with himself; and for that Reason 'tis said, *Jam. 2. 13. That Mercy Rejoiceth against Judgment*: And when God was Pleased to shew his Glory to *Moses* on *Mount Sinai*, as he passed by before him, he Proclaimed himself in this Stile, *The Lord, the Lord God, Merciful and Gracious, Long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth; keeping Mercy for Thousands, Forgiving Iniquity, and Transgression, and Sin, and that will by no means clear the Guilty, Exod. 34. 6, 7.*

CHAP.

## CHAP. V.

*That we should not Judge of God's  
Love to us, by accidental Events,  
which depend upon our own Choice.*

Secondly, **H**AVING thus, according to this Description, possess our Minds with True and Genuine Apprehensions of God, we must be careful, Secondly, That we do not Judge of his Love towards Mankind, by accidental Events, which depend upon our own choice. By accidental Events, I mean those Miseries and Punishments of Men, which befall them by their own foolish wilfulness, besides God's Sincere Desire, and Primary Intentions. *He is not willing that any should Perish, 2 Pet. 3. 9. As I Live, saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, Ezek. 33. 11.* And yet it appears by the last Words of that verse, *That the House of Israel took a ready course to Die, and in Probability many of them did.* Where then lieth the Cause of this Miscarriage? why, even

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even at Wicked Men's own Doors ; because either they make no Use at all, or make a very Ill Use of God's Love towards them. O! *Israel Thou hast destroyed thy Self, but in Me is thine Help*, saith the Holy One of *Israel*, *Hof. 13. 9.* This is the plain Account of the Matter : Help is not wanting on God's part, *He giveth to all Men Liberally*, *Jam. 1. 5.* He provideth Means enough to keep us all from Destruction, if we will set our Hearts to Apply them duly ; he is Loving unto every Man, but every Man is not so Loving to himself as God is. And hence it cometh to pass, that though God's Intentions be equally Benevolent, yet it happens accidentally, that they have not equal Success, because all do not take an equal Care to Answer God's Goodness. *Some Reject* (or Frustrate) *the Counsel of God*, *Luk. 7. 30.* Which could not be, if Mercy were not offer'd, and if God's Intentions towards them, were not Kind and Real. *Some Resist the Holy Ghost*, *Act 7. 51.* Which could not be, if the Holy Ghost were not there to Operate, and strive with them. *Some Grieve the Good Spirit of God*, *Ephes. 4. 30.* Which could not be, if the Comforter were not given them first, to Seal and Mark them, as Men Purchased with the Blood of *Christ*, to be his Servants. *Some are in danger*

*danger of Quenching the Spirit, 1 Thes. 5. 19. Which could not be, if the Spirit had not Kindled some Sparks in them. Some hide their Talents in the Ground, Mat. 25. 25. Which could not be, if a Talent were not first put into their Hands. Some presently lose out of their Hearts, the Seed of Eternal Life, others will not suffer it to take deep Root; and others Choak it with the Cares and Pleasures of this Life, so that it bringeth no Fruit unto Perfection, Luk. 8. Which could not be, if the Seed had not been Sown: Events in this Case are different, according as Men's Hearts are either Good or Bad; and according as their Care and Husbandry is, greater or less; and hence it is, that when all Men are called to a State of Salvation, some Work it out, and some Neglect it: One Judas continues the Servant of Christ, and another hath the Character of the Son of Perdition; and Simon Peter Weeps for his own Sins, and Converts his Brethren from theirs, while Simon the Sorcerer remains in the Gall of Bitterness, and the Bond of Iniquity. The Reason of this is within Men, because some are Diligent to continue and grow in the Grace of God; others Frustrate it, and turn it into Wantonness. It doth not become the Wisdom of the great Legislatour of the World, to Drag People to Heaven*

Heaven against their Wills ; or to force their Obedience to his Laws, by a Power that is Irresistible : For this would be, to Destroy the Nature of Obedience, which ought to be Hearty, Chearful and Free ; and it would take away the Reason of Rewards, which Obedience cannot be capable of, if it be not an Act of Choice ; no more than Machines and Engines deserve a Reward, when they move as they are stirred, without any inward Principle of their own. God sets before us *Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing, and bids us choose Life, Deut. 30. 19.* He calls upon us by his Ministers, Word, and Spirit to conform to his Laws ; he affords us all the necessary means of Happiness ; he gives us a new Principle, and a Sufficiency of Spiritual Strength to help our Natural Weaknesses, and to enable us to become New Creatures, and having shed abroad such abundance of his Love, he leaves us in our own Power to Employ it. Because we are Rational and Voluntary Agents, it is fit we should be dealt with in a Moral way, by Instruction, Arguments, Persuasion, and such other Motives as are consistent with our Natures ; and suitable to Beings, which know the differences between Good and Evil ; and have not onely a Power of choosing and refusing, but are moreover deeply concern'd in Point of Duty,  
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and Eternal Interest to chuse the Good, and to refuse the Evil. The Divine Grace serves to Help and Rectifie our Nature, but not to take away our Powers and Faculties of Acting ; nor do we cease to be Men, when we are called to be Christians : Still we are in our own Hands in a great measure ; and still the Proposals are like those formerly made to *Cain*, *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted ? And if thou dost not well, Sin lieth at the Door*, Gen. 4. 7. If any of us fall under a Curse, after all, as *Cain* did ; or be Banisht from God's Presence, as *Cain* was, it is because our Hearts are Evil like his ; and because we throw off, (as he did) the Love of God, and of our Brother. If Men become Reprobates, it is because they will be of Reprobate Minds ; for God doth not deliver them up to a State of Reprobation, or to strong Delusions, *So that in the end, they are Damned, till they refuse to receive the Love of the Truth, that they might be Saved*, 2 Thes. 2. 10. Such Miscarriages ought not to be imputed to the God of Truth, Purity, Mercy and Compassion, or to him that loved us, and gave himself for us : God forbid. He intended to Save all to the uttermost, that would come unto God by him ; and he did all that lay on his part to draw all to him ; therefore he is the Saviour of all, though  
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all are not actually saved. That they were to blame themselves for, and none else but themselves; because, nothing was wanting in their Redeemer. He had been the Saviour of the whole World, though none had believed on him, but his Blessed Mother; because it would have been their own Crime, if others had not believed on him, as well as she, because they would not have been gathered unto him, as he himself said of *Jerusalem* and her Children, when he would have gather'd them as an Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings. The *Sun* is truly said to Enlighten the World, should all Mankind shut their Eyes, and refuse to behold its Rays, or hide themselves in Holes and Caverns, from the Heat of them. So did the *Son* of Righteousness rise upon all; upon the Evil, and upon the Good; upon the Just, and upon the Unjust: He was Good to all Mankind, though some hate the Light, and will not come unto the Light, but love Darkness rather, because their Deeds are Evil, *Job. 3. 19.* Now this is purely Accidental, in respect of God's Intentions and Desires; and therefore we may not judge of God's Love by such Accidents, no more than we allow our selves to judge of one anothers Purposes and Wishes, by Events, that are quite beside them; nay, contrary unto them. An upright Law-giver con-

sults the Good of the whole Commonwealth; gives them Rules to be the Measures of their Actions, and encourages them all with Promises of Rewards upon their Obedience; and if, notwithstanding all this, some will be so Perverse and Headstrong, as not to be Govern'd, but will follow still such irregular Courses, as will bring some to the Gibbet, and others to the Flames: The Condemnation of such People, is very Just, because it is from themselves. A tender Physician consults the good of all his Patients, provides Remedies for them, adviseth them to make a due Use of them, and tells them the danger that will attend their wilful neglect; especially, if the Disease be in its nature Mortal; and, if notwithstanding all this, a sick Man will fly in the Physicians Face, and throw away that which he should Receive; his Death is Accidental, and ought not to be charged to his account, who would have saved him from it. A Conscientious Divine, I am sure, consults the Eternal good of all that are committed to his Charge; prayeth for them, directs them according to the best of his Skill and Power, calls upon them to be merciful to their own Souls, admonishes and intreats them, thinks no Service too much for them, seeks to do them good, sincerely wisheth their good; and, if notwithstanding

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ing this, they will not hearken, nor mind, but Destroy themselves after all, by the violence of their wicked Passions, or by their willful Stupidity; this doth not argue any want of affection in Him; it is besides what the good Man Intends, or Desires; that which he is Grieved and Afflicted at, the very apprehensions of the Event is sad, and accidental, but He himself is clear from the Blood of all. No Man questions the Affections of a Father to the Children of his Bowels; and yet it is common for Children by their own Folly and Obstinate temper, to Ruin all their Fortunes, notwithstanding the Cares, Counsels, and Endeavours of their Parent, and thereby bring down his Gray Hairs with Sorrow to the *Grave*. Now, if in these Cases, Intentions ought not to be Measured by Accidents, much less are we to judge of God's Decrees and Purposes by any Man's Ruin; because, God of his Goodness doth much more for us all, than what we poor Creatures are able to do for one another; how great soever our mutul Zeal and Affections may be: He giveth Grace, which none of us can give; He bestoweth his Holy Spirit, which is not in our power; He strengthens us with Might in the Inner-Man, which is out of the reach of our Hand; He Prevents, Follows, and Furthers

Men with secret Operations, which are beyond and above our capacities to do; and if notwithstanding all outward and inward means of Salvation, and notwithstanding God's wishes to the contrary; some, for whom Christ Died, will go on still in Error and Sin, till they Destroy themselves finally; this doth not argue any want of Love, or gracious Intentions in God, but is a sad argument, that some might have been Healed and would not; an act of Perverseness and Intractability, which in God's day will turn to their greater condemnation.

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## CHAP. VI.

*That we must not measure God's Purposes as to things Eternal, by his present Acts of Providence, in dispensing some special outward Favours in this Life.*

Thirdly, **A**S we must not judge of God's Love by accidental Events, so neither must we measure his Purpose as to things Eternal, by his present Acts of Providence, in dispensing some special outward Favours in this Life. By special Favours, I understand certain singular Advantages in respect of this World, and such too, as have some respect to the World to come; in both respects, very valuable Privileges and Blessings, which some enjoy in a greater, and better measure than others: And from those, which I may call Temporal Privileges, though Spiritual Advantages go along

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with them many times, to conclude that the rest who enjoy them not in the like degree, are under God's absolute Hatred, Or, in a State of Damnation, is very Unreasonable and Injurious to God's Honour. As for instance, whereas the Lord Promised *Abraham* upon his Obediential and Exemplary Faith, that he would be a God unto him, and to his Seed after him, and that he would give them the Land of *Canaan* for their Possession: God intended this Promise should be made good, not to *Ishmael* and his Posterity (though *Ishmael* was *Abraham's* First Born) but to *Isaac* and his Offspring. *In Isaac shall thy Seed be called*, said God to him, Gen. 21. 12. Meaning, that *Isaac* and his Descendants should Inherit the Promise. Now this was a special Favour and Privilege to him and his Issue; especially considering the Spiritual Blessings which went along with this Earthly one; that to them pertained with the this Adoption, the Glory (or the Ark of God, and his Glorious Presence in it) and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises of *Christ's* coming among them, and from them, *Rom. 9. 4* But though *Isaac* and his Seed had these singular Advantages; we must not by any means conclude hence, that *Ishmael* had no share at all of God's Love,  
much

much less may we infer, that he was absolutely Rejected of God as a Rebrogate to Eternity. For as touching a future State, the Scripture is wholly Silent, and therefore so must we; And though God did not Bless him in this World so greatly and abundantly, as he Blest his Brother *Isaac*; yet I cannot find any reason to think, but that God Loved him too. For we are told, *Gen.* 17. That God Commanded him to be Circumcised; which was the outward Mark of the Divine Favour, the Token of God's Covenant; and therefore we cannot suppose him to have been quite shut out of it. Nay, God told *Abraham* there expressly, *v.* 20. That as for *Ishmael*, he had heard him, and had Blessed him, and would make him Fruitful, and would Multiply him exceedingly, so that twelve Princes, and a great Nation should come out of his Loins, though God intended to Establish his more particular Covenant, and special Favour with *Isaac*. And as for *Ishmael's* Posterity, though they were not Blest with all those outward peculiar Privileges, which *Isaac's* Children enjoyed, yet we find nothing to perswade us, but that they were allow'd to Live in the Land of *Canaan* with their Kindred, if they would Profess the Religion, that was Established there. Nay they were in a Capacity of having their share (though not

so great a share) of the Divine Favour and Goodness; provided they did not turn Idolaters, nor forsake the God of their Father *Abraham*, but did Worship him still as *Abraham* was wont to do, and as he Commanded his Children, and his Household after him, *Gen.* 18. 19.

I instance next in *Jacob* and *Esau*, whose Case is constantly urged in defence of those rigid Doctrines, which are so inconsistent with the Notion of God's Love to the World. *The Children being not as yet Born*, saith *St. Paul*, nor having done Good or Evil, it was said unto *Rebecca*, *The Elder shall Serve the Younger*, as is it Written, *Jacob have I Loved, but Esau have I Hated*, *Rom.* 9. 11, 12, 13. These Words some Interpret as if God hated *Esau*, if not his Posterity too, with a perfect hatred; and by an absolute Decree, Eternally deprived them of all Hopes of enjoying his Favour in this World, and in the other too: And hence they go on to lay down this Principle, that God hateth some People, meerly because he will, and shuts them out of the Kingdom of Heaven, without any foresight or consideration of their Evil Works. But whosoever shall with Attention and Impartiality of Mind, consider the Apostles meaning in that place, will  
not

not find the least ground for that Principle, by what he saith of *Eſau*, and that for theſe two Reaſons.

I. F I R S T, Becauſe St. *Paul* doth not mean, that God hated *Eſau*, in a Proper, Poſitive and Strict Sence; but only, that he did not Love him ſo much as he did his Brother *Jacob*. For the Word Hatred, is often taken Comparatively, for a lower and leſſer degree of affection. As the Wiſe Man ſaith, *He that Spareth his Rod, Hateth his Son*, Prov. 13. 24. That is, he doth not Love him ſo well as he who Chasteeneth his Son betimes. So when our Saviour ſaith, Luk. 14. 26. *If any Man come to me, and Hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wiſe, and Children, and Brethren, and Siſters; yea, and his own Life alſo, he cannot be my Diſciple*: This ſaying would be ſtrangely hard, were it to be underſtood in a ſtrict Sence; for Chriſtianity doth not cancel the Bonds of Nature: To Hate ſuch near Relations, is an Unnatural and Wicked thing, which we may be ſure, is utterly Forbidden by his Religion, who Commands us to Love even our Enemies. But our Lord meant, that we muſt Love Father and Mother, and Life it Self, leſs than we love *Chriſt*; that our Affections to theſe, muſt not compare with thoſe we are to have for him, who Loved us ſo as to Dye for us: And therefore St. *Matthew*

## A Practical Discourse upon

*Matthew renders it thus; He that Loveth Father or Mother more than Me, is not Worthy of Me; and he that Loveth Son or Daughter more than Me, is not Worthy of me, St. Mat. 10. 37.* In this Sence God is said to have hated *Esau*, meaning in comparison of the particular kindness he shew'd unto *Jacob*: He Loved *Jacob* more, he expressed his Goodness to him in a greater Measure, and in an higher Degree, than he express'd it to *Esau*, though he was the Elder of the two.

2. SECONDLY, This lower Degree of Love to *Esau*, was not in reference to a Future State, but only as to some outward Blessings and Advantages in this World. And hereof there are two plain Arguments, the one is drawn from *St Paul's* own Construction of the matter, (viz.) that the Elder should serve the Younger; which can be meant of nothing but Temporal Servitude, according to the Will and Appointment of their Father *Isaac*, saying to *Jacob*, *Be Lord over thy Brethren, and let thy Mother's Sons bow down to thee*, Gen. 27. 29. The other Argument is taken from *St. Paul's* Design and Drift there, which was to shew, that the *Jew's* had no reason to be Scandalized, because God had now given the means of Grace to the *Gentiles*, as well as he had



had to them: Had bestowed many Privileges upon the *Gentiles*, as well as upon them; had Adopted the *Gentiles*, as formerly he had Adopted them; nay, had called the *Gentiles* to be his peculiar People, and Rejected them, because of their Unbelief; the Apostle shews, that the *Jews* had no Reason to Stumble and be Offended at this, for this was no unjust or unusual Act of the Divine Oeconomy: God did not bind himself to observe Privileges, or to consider Precedency; witness his dealing with *Ishmael* first, his passing them by, and his granting the Land of *Canaan* to *Isaac*, though he was the younger Brother; and witness his dealing also with *Esau*, his passing him by too, and his continuing the former grant to *Jacob*, though he was the younger Brother likewise. Upon this Account, the *Jews* should not depend upon their Primogeniture neither: It was not an Unrighteous thing in God, to grant now the outward means of Grace, and Privileges Evangelical to the *Gentiles*, and to make the *Gentiles* his peculiar People to enjoy them in a high degree, and to take away those singular Prerogatives, and outward Blessings from the *Jews*, though they were the Elder People. This is the plain Account of St. Paul's design and meaning, in the ninth Chapter to the *Romans*

mans, and all that can be reasonably gathered thence out of the instance of *Esau*, is what I observed before in the instance of *Ismael*; namely, that God did not give him such outward Advantages in this Life, as he gave his Brother *Jacob*, but deny'd him special Favours, for some Reasons best known to himself. And in all this, there is nothing of God's laying *Esau*, under the dismal Curse of Eternal Reprobation: There is not a Word of *Esau's* Damnation, nor any thing like it; nor do we meet with any thing (I think) in the Scriptures, sufficient to make Men conclude, that he was a Damned Person. Indeed the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, calls him a Prophane Person, because for one Morsel of Meat, he Sold his Birth right; to which the Kingly Power, and the Priestly Office, did in those Days belong. But that single Act is the only great Wickedness that is Recorded of him, and of that, in all probability he did Repent too, when he besought his Father, to Repent of giving away the Blessing from him. However that was, we do not Read, that he ever Apostatiz'd from God, or that in the whole course of his Life, he deserted the true Religion Practised by his Father *Isaac*, and therefore there is no apparent ground, for the heavy Sentence which is commonly past upon

upon him by some, who perhaps are more prodigal of other Mens Souls, than they are careful of their own.

I have insisted the more copiously upon these Famous instances, because the true account of them, is not vulgarly known; and because, some who should have understood these things rightly, have quite misapply'd them, and have argued from them to destroy the Belief of God's Love to the World, which is one of God's great Glories, and the great Hope of all the Ends of the Earth, ,

AND now, to draw this point to an end; God's dispensing of his special Favours in this Life (whether they be bestow'd upon particular Persons, or on whole Nations) can be no Token of their Fortunes in another Life, and therefore we must not Measure God's Love to Mankind by the Proportions or Disproportions of his Providence in distributing and ordering Affairs here. God hath a sincere Love for the whole Race of *Adam*, though he be not pleased to give us all here the same equal Advantages, and in all this, God is Righteous, because it is an Eternal Rule that we find, *Luk. 12. 47, 48, That Servant which knew his Lords Will, and prepared not himself,*

*self, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many Stripes; but they that know not, and do things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with few Stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom Men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

We must not conclude, that all People are in a Lost condition, who do not enjoy those singular Blessings which others have; especially, if they make a due use of the Advantages which God hath given them. For these are things which God hath a Power and Right to dispose of according to his own will and pleasure: And, however he is pleas'd to dispose of them, he doth no wrong to any. Besides, this World is not the place for Rewards, and if some fall short, as to these outward Matters here, they are capable of having an abundant compensation made them in a Future State. But this is not their case, who once fall under everlasting Condemnation; and therefore Mens Lots in another World, ought to be determin'd, not according to *Pleasure*, but according to *Righteousness*. Their sad condition there, is Remediless, and unchangeable, and the Torments they endure, are not only Simply and Infinitely Evils, but they are Evils too, which are supposed to be inflicted on them, under the notion of

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of punishments ; and therefore they must be in consideration of antecedent Crimes, Knowingly and Deliberately, and of choice committed ; for to Infiict Eternal Torments upon Men for what they cannot avoid, is Inconsistent with the Righteousness of God, contrary to Eternal Reason, and utterly Repugnant to the infinite excellency and perfections of his most Blessed Nature.

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## CHAP. VII.

*That we must not judge Uncharitably of other People, upon a Presumption, that we our Selves, are of the Number of those, who are Elected to Everlasting Life; and what the Scripture means by the Elect.*

*Fourthly,* **C**ONSIDERING God's Love to the whole World, we must be careful not to Judge Uncharitably of others, upon a Presumption, that we our selves are of the Number of those who are Elected to Everlasting Life. Divines usually give us a Scholastical Distinction, between Election unto Glory, and Election unto Grace. By Election unto Glory, they mean God's purpose of bringing all those, and only those unto Eternal Life, who Believe in *Christ*, and observe his

his Laws. Now though the consideration of this be of great Comfort to all who Love the Lord *Jesus* in Sincerity, yet the Decree it self (as far as it is known to us) is General; it is Revealed to us in general Terms; as to particulars, it is secret: particulars are not to be known; nor can any ordinary Christian be Infallibly certain, that he is chosen to Everlasting Happiness, till he is gone out of the World.

WE Read indeed of a Book of Life, wherein Men's Names are said to be Written. *St. John* speaks of such a Book he saw in his Vision; the design whereof was, to represent things to us in a way, which was most adapted and suitable to our Capacities. The meaning of the Vision as to that, is, that God doth infallibly Know, and at the Day of Judgment will openly Declare, Reveal, and Reward those who do now Faithfully serve him; of this purpose of God, there is no manner of Question, and therefore if Men conceive, that we dispute against any such Decree, they do but beat the Air, and Talk of Matters which they do not understand. The thing insisted on is this, that none are chosen to Eternal Happiness, without any consideration of their Faith, and Works, and perseverance to the end in well doing.

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And as touching a Man's particular Election unto Glory, or the Gracious purpose of God towards this or that Person in particular; this we say, is a Secret, a Decree not to be known, till the Book of Life comes to be opened, that is, till the Day of Doom cometh. Therefore every one of us must stay our time, nor must any dare to go now upon fond presumptions of their own; especially so as to condemn or think hardly of others: I call such partial Conceits, fond Presumptions of Men's own, because, though many People be strongly perswaded, that they are absolutely and particularly Ordained unto Life, and cannot miscarry; yet as to this, they believe without Book, and without sufficient Grounds, because they want the Authority of Divine Revelation, which is the only sure Ground-work of a right Faith. 'Tis Imagination only, and Opinion how strong and violent soever it may be; and instead of being bottom'd upon the Word of God, it may proceed from two very evil Causes.

I. FIRST, From a Spirit of Pride, which Tempteth some to think, their Names *ought* to be Written in Heaven, and therefore are soon perswaded to believe, that they really *are* so, though for this, they



they take either their own Word, or the Opinion of others, whose Persons they have in equal admiration. I heartily wish, that all such as go upon this imagination, would seriously consider, whether this be not one prime reason of it, because it is a Notion so very pleasing and suitable to their own Hearts.

2. SECONDLY, It may proceed too from a Principle of Carnality; for it is an imagination that is Friendly and Kind to Flesh and Blood: Where-ever it prevails such as are possess'd with it, find no necessity for them to mortifie their Lusts, and to be careful of Living Godly, Righteous, and Sober Lives. This they call good Morality, but cannot think it of any use to them, because they suppose themselves sure of their Salvation by God's Absolute Decree; upon this Account, they and their Vices may dwell very quietly and lovingly together: They may be Lew'd, Dishonest, Unjust, Hypocritical, Malicious, Revengeful, False, Troublesome, Uncharitable, Proud, and Lovers of the World; and yet these Vices are (as they think) consistent with their State of Grace, because they are perswaded that stands firm, upon the immutable Will of God. Considering therefore the Vanity and Original of such *Pharisaical* conceits,

it is very dangerous for People to give any way to them, and more dangerous to trust to them after a presumptuous manner, and most of all dangerous to value themselves upon them; especially so, as to Judge uncharitably of others, as if they were no better than Reprobates and Castaways. This is a very ill thing, and that which is far from being a Sign of their particular Election; rather indeed an Argument of the contrary, because all Uncharitableness, is a direct Violation of the Law of *Christ*, by which we shall all of us be Judged in the Day of God. Since God Loves us all, instead of shutting any out of his Kingdom, every one should lend his Brother his Hand to help him in.

2dly, FOR secondly there is (as Divines usually speak) an Election unto Grace, which we have all a Title unto. Election unto Grace is, when People have this great Blessing and Privilege given them, to Live under the means of Grace; when they have the Gospel Mysteries Publish'd and Revealed to them; and when they have the Assistance of the Holy Spirit offer'd and afforded them so that they Receive the Truth as it is in *Jesus*: Whatever Fancies some are apt to

to entertain concerning this matter; this is the true Scripture Notion of Election. Accordingly the Scripture means by the Elect of God, not such as are supposed to have been from Eternity particularly, and by name designed for Glory; for I can confidently say it, that the Word is not (in that Sence) any where used in the whole Scripture, but generally such as now profess true Faith in *Christ*; and especially such Eminent Persons among them, as by their Vertuous and Holy Lives, adorn the Doctrine of God their Saviour in all things, and resolve firmly and faithfully to Persevere unto the end in so doing. The Reason of this honourable Appellation, is taken from the different Effect, which the Word of God hath upon the Hearts of them that hear it: On some it maketh a slight and superficial Impression, like the Seed cast on the Way side: Others receive it with Joy, and Believe for a while; but in time of Temptation, immediately fall away: In others, it taketh deeper and better Root; but yet in time, is choaked with the Cares, and Riches, and Pleasures of this Life, so that it bringeth no Fruit to Perfection. But others there are (though the fewest in number) that lay up the Word in

Honest and Good Hearts, and that bring forth Fruit plentifully, and with perseverance in well-doing to their Lives end. Now of all that Profess *Christ's* Religion, those who adhere close to it are the best, the most Eminent and Principal ones; and therefore the Scripture calleth them, after a more peculiar manner, The Elect. Many are called to the knowledge of the Truth, but few are chosen, saith our Saviour; or according to the *Greek*, the Elect are few; that is, the Faithful and Choice Professors of the Truth, are few in comparison. So *Matt. 24. 22.* Our Saviour speaking of the great Tribulation that was to come upon *Jerusalem*, said, *That for the Elects sake, those Days should be shortned*; meaning, that out of Respect and Love to the true Believers among the *Jews*, God would shorten the time so, that a remnant even of the Unbelieving *Jews* should escape too, though they did not deserve it. So again, *v. 24.* Our Lord foretold, that False *Christs* would arise, which would (if it were possible) deceive the very Elect; that is, the most Sincere, Persevering Christians, to use the Words of our incomparable Paraphrast *Dr. Hammond*. And so in divers other places, where it is said, that God will gather together his Elect; that he will Avenge

venge his own Elect; that none shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect; that we must put on (as the Elect of God) Holy and Beloved Bowels of Mercy; and thelike, the Word signifies those, who are now in a Blessed State of Faith and Holiness; those who Serve, Obey, and Love the Lord *Jesus* in Sincerity. Briefly if you search the New Testament throughout, you will find this Observation true, that generally speaking, People are called the Elect of God, not in respect of any Antecedent particular Decree, which is a thing altogether hidden; but in respect of those excellent Qualities, Vertues, and Perfections, for which some are Eminent and Exemplary in this present World; and because for their gracious dispositions and endowments, they are the Choicest, the Best, the most valuable part of Mankind; a peculiar people, Zealous of good Works. There is no doubt but God knoweth who are his, who will continue his, who will be fit and rightly prepared for his most Glorious, Beatifical Presence. But we have no Revelation concerning of particulars; and as for the Scripture, which is the standing Revelation we are to trust unto and to go by, it meaneth by the Elect, Sincere, Sound, Holy, and Faithful Christians: They are God's Elect, in the Scripture Sence:

AND hence it followeth, that none of those People who profess the Faith of *Christ*, and Obedience to him, should be Cenforious and Uncharitable to others, who own the Lord *Jesus* as well as they; and who are (for ought they know) in as ready, nay by their Humility and Charity, in a readier way to Eternal Happiness, than such as out of a principle of *Pharisaism*, and Spiritual Pride, Judge hardly of their Brethren. Have they been Baptized in the Name of *Christ*? So have we: Do they Believe the several Articles of the *Christian Faith*? So do we: Do they use the Ordinances of *Christ*? So do we: Do they pretend Holiness? I pray God we may all appear Holy in the Day of God; and I wish some be not grossly mistaken in the Notion of Holiness: for it doth not consist in a demure Look, nor in odd Gestures, nor in dry Opinions, nor in Raptures and Ecstacies, nor in Niceness, Affectation, or Singularity as to Matters Circumstantial. But good Morality is a great part of True Holiness, and it doth entirely consist in a Godly, Righteous, and Sober Life: And whether their Holiness or ours be most substantial, that Day will shew, when all our Works shall be tried, and when God will Judge even the Secrets of Men by *Jesus Christ*.

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IN the mean time, People should not talk of their Election and Holiness, so as to forget Charity. God's great and undeserved Goodness to us all, should Teach us to be Good, and Kind, and Affectionate to each other. *Beloved, if God so Loved us, we ought also to love one another*, saith the Apostle 1 Joh. 4. 11. Some have a strange faculty of Predestinating Themselves to Eternal Happiness, and of Reprobating others to Eternal Misery. But by all that I have read, and considered upon this Subject, it is great Ignorance joyn'd together with Self-love and Factiousness of Spirit, that prevails with some Men to maintain a Point so opposite to the Love of God, since the Point has been so accurately Examined, especially in these Later, and more Inquisitive Ages.

INSTEAD of expressing uncharitableness to one another, upon fond presumption when we are all called by the Great Mercy of God to a State of Salvation; we should every one of us give diligence, to make our Calling and Election sure, as the Apostle tells us, 2 Pet. 1. 10. Meaning, that we should make such a good use of these means of Grace, we have the Privilege and Happiness of enjoying, that they may  
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be effectual to us, and that we fail not of obtaining the end of that Faith and Hope, to which we are all called. And the way the Apostle directs, is Plain and Open : If (saith he) ye do these things, ye shall never fall; that is, if ye do the things he mentioneth particularly at the 5, 6, and 7, *ver.* of that Chapter; if ye add to your Faith Vertue, and to Vertue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance, Patience, and to Patience, Godliness, and to Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness, Charity : If these things be in you, and abound, ye shall never fall. You see the Terms of Everlasting Life are conditional; and that it lies on our part to perform those conditions. Whence it necessarily follows, that whatever God's Purposes are, there are none on Their side, who are People of Ungodly and Uncharitable Minds. The Decree is extant, *Heb. 12. 14. Without Holiness* (that is, without the entire practice of Religion) *no Man shall see the Lord*; and therefore it is very dangerous, to trust to God's Secret Decrees, while Men are wanting to that which is a manifest Duty. Besides, there is required Habitual Sanctity, and Purity of Heart, to fit and prepare us for an Heavenly State; to make us Meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of Saints in  
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Light, *Col. 1. 2.* without this gracious disposition of Soul, the Works of Heaven would be utterly Unsuitable to our Inclinations; and we our selves should be utterly Uncapable of exerting our faculties upon them, with the chearfulness and pleasure which is the Life of the Blessed; and the Joys there are of such a Spiritual and Sublime Nature, that they are altogether inconsistent with Tempers, which are Earthly, Sensual, Devilish. So that, were there no Decree, to keep Evil-minded People out of God's Everlasting Kingdom; the very Nature of the Thing would render it absolutely impossible for them to be Happy in it, because their Corrupt dispositions are quite Unfit for it; nay, Averse and Contrary to those things, wherein the Blessedness of Heaven doth consist. Therefore, instead of taking upon us to shut others out, we should have a great care lest we exclude our selves; by depending upon Decrees on God's part, without Holiness on our own: Upon such Decrees, as may be said to be of our own making, if we do not qualifie our selves in such a sort as God hath commanded us. Men should look very well at Home, inquire diligently into their true State, Rectifie their Tempers, Mould their Hearts unto a Divine Frame, set their Affections on things which  
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are Honest, Pure, and Lovely; Resemble God, by being Merciful and Good to All; and Imprint on their Souls, those Divine Characters, which are a Similitude of His Perfections, and Glory. This is the ultimate end of God's Love to us all, that he may make us like unto Himself, in the entire goodness of our Nature; and that by those means he may render us truly Happy in the Fruition of Himself: And whatever some giddy-headed People conceive, it is very high and dangerous Presumption, to leave the whole business of their Salvation to God; and to throw it all upon God, first to ordain them peremptorily to Everlasting Happiness, and then to work upon them after an Irresistible manner, as if they were to be haled and forced to it, though with all their ill Qualities about them, and notwithstanding their uncharitableness; in particular, than which nothing can be more Opposite to the Love of God, nor to the Condition of that Place, which is the Habitation of his Glory.

## CHAP. VIII.

*That our Care must be, to make such a due Use of God's Love and Goodness towards us all, as to perform those things which are indispensibly necessary, in order to the actual Possession of God's Everlasting Kingdom. The Reason of this, and what the things are, which we are bound to perform.*

*Fifthly,* **C**ONSIDERING therefore, what Qualifications are necessary in Us, to make our present Calling and Election firm, effectual, and eternally Beneficial to us, our care must be in the fifth place, to make such a due Use of the Divine Love, and Goodness towards us all; as to perform those things which are indispensibly necessary, in order to the actual Possessi-

Possession of God's Everlasting Kingdom. As yet, the way to it is laid open for us, and we have a Liberty and Power given us to enter in ; but it is upon certain Conditions. We are delivered from a necessity of Perishing, notwithstanding our many Provocations; we are made capable of Eternal Life, notwithstanding our former guilt : But yet, divers things are required on our part, that we may be actually admitted into a fixt State of Happiness in Heaven. Though God loved us, and gave his Son to us, to tender satisfaction in our stead, and by undergoing a Temporary Death himself, to Rescue us from Everlasting Torments, (in which Services of the Divine Oeconomy, the World had not any the least Hand; they were acts of pure Grace, of Mercy undeserved, unthought of by Mankind) yet God being the Sovereign Governour and Legislator of the Universe, it would have been inconsistent with his Honour and Greatness, to have given up the Authority of his Laws, which yet he must have done, had he permitted us to take our own Courses, and to live according to our own Wills, without any danger. Therefore, that he might at once provide for our Indemnity, and secure his own Authority also, when Christ was pleased so freely to undertake the Office  
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of a Mediator ; it was Covenanted between the Father and Him, that upon such and such Conditions, his Obedience , Death and Intercession, should be perfectly available on our behalf. And, for the making of those terms good it was Covenanted likewise, that the Holy Spirit should be given to enable us for the performance of those Duties which were expected from us; and that such a Measure should be accepted at our Hands, as we should perform by our sincere endeavours, according to our Capacities and Power. Hence it was, that Christ brought us Laws from Heaven, to Regulate and Govern our Actions; that we might not frustrate the Counsel and Love of God towards us, that we might not at last fail of God's Grace, nor come short of his Glory ; and of that Happiness which the Lord Jesus came into the World to purchase for us all. The Price is paid ; and it was Love unspeakable in Christ to lay it down, and in his Father to accept it at his Hands for us. But though the general Purchase be made yet, for the compleat Possession of it, we must be careful to behave our selves so as God requires us, in order to the conveyance of the Title, to every particular Soul. We must believe stedfastly on the Name of the Son of God ; and to this Faith, we must add sincere Repentance

pentance from all Dead Works; and make  
 it our business to serve God, in true Holi-  
 ness, and Righteousness, all the days of our  
 Life. Without these Performances on our  
 part, Christ will, in the end, profit us no-  
 thing, because he is the *Author of Eter-  
 nal Salvation unto all them that obey him,*  
*Heb. 5. 9.* They only will have the Final  
 and Everlasting enjoyment of God's Love  
 to the World. For the Law, by which  
 the Righteous Judge of all the Earth will  
 proceed, is very plain, *Rom. 2. 6, 7, 8, 9,*  
*10, 11.* *He will render to every Man accord-*  
*ing to his Deeds; to them, who by patient*  
*continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and*  
*Honour, and Immortality* (God will render)  
*Eternal Life: But unto them that are con-*  
*tentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey*  
*Unrighteousness* (He will render) *Indignation*  
*and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish upon*  
*every Soul that doeth Evil, of the Jew first,*  
*and also of the Gentile; But Glory, and*  
*Honour, and Peace, to every Man that work-*  
*eth Good, to the Jew first, and also to the*  
*Gentile; for there is no respect of Persons*  
*with God.* You see, Men's Eternal Doom,  
 depends upon the Quality of their Lives  
 and Actions here; as they are either Good  
 or Evil, so will God reward them with  
 Happiness, or Misery hereafter. And for  
 this Reason it was, that St. Paul calleth  
 God

God the Saviour of all Men, *especially of those that believe*, 1 Tim. 4. 10. He is the Saviour of all Men Intentionally ; because, He intended not to Reject any by an Absolute Decree, or to exclude any from the Hopes and Means of Salvation ; but, by the Doctrines and Holy Life of his Son *Jesus Christ*, did intend to open and shew the way of Peace unto all, and encouraged all People to follow it to the end ; and because too he sent *Christ* to offer him satisfaction for the Sins of all Men, to Die for all Men, and to Merit Eternal Salvation for all, if all would lay hold on his Merits, by such a lively, operative, and purifying Faith, as is perfected by Charity. In short, because he hath done those things which were becoming and proper for a Wise and Merciful God to do, for Sinful, and Reasonable Creatures, in order to their Salvation : He is rightly called the Saviour of all Men, Sufficiently, Meritoriously, Intentionally ; and if he be not to all Actually and Effectually so too, it must proceed from the voluntary Neglect and Crimes of some, who by their Evil Deeds, hinder themselves from being Actually and Effectually Saved. To illustrate this by a plain Similitude ( such as it is : ) Suppose a great number of us were Captives, and Bond Slaves, sold (as Slaves were formerly wont to be Sold) into the Hands of Arbitrary

bitrary and Merciless Masters : And suppose the King of his tender Compassion and Goodness towards us, as having been his own Subjects, should send a valuable Consideration, and Ample Ransom, with a gracious purpose to Redeem us all without exception, but with a *Proviso*, and upon condition of our true Faith and Allegiance to him ; though some out of a strange Love of Slavery, or through Carelessness or Crossness of Temper, or by some other Miscarriages, might hinder themselves from being Actually Ransomed, and so throw away their Liberty for ever ; yet this could be no disparagement to the King's Clemency and Goodness : He would deserve the Name of our common Redeemer nevertheless, the intentional Redeemer of us all ; and I doubt not, but in such a case, we should all think it very Reasonable for us to acknowledge the Kindness intended for all. To apply this instance, and to use the Scripture Expressions which relate unto it : We were all once sold under Sin, become the Servants of Unrighteousness, taken Captives by the Devil, who laid his snares for all Mankind. But God of his Mercy, sent his *Son* into the World to recover us all out of the snare of the Devil ; to lead Captivity Captive, to give himself a Ransom for all, to Redeem us from all Iniquity, to  
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deliver us from the Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God; that being made free from Sin, we might become Servants unto God, and have our Fruit unto Holiness, and the end Everlasting Life. Nothing can be clearer, than this is from the *Holy Scripture*, that God sent his *Son* into the World to this end and purpose, and with this most gracious Intention; and for this Reason, the whole Race of Mankind ought with all Thankfulness of Heart to acknowledge, and adore him as the Saviour of us all. If, notwithstanding all his tenders of Grace and Mercy, some will be so wanting to their Eternal Interest, as to continue still in Bondage, and to go on in their Wicked and Ungodly Courses, till they take their last Fortunes with the Devil and his Angels, from whose Power and Damnation they might have been delivered: This will be indeed an aggravation of their own Crimes; and Folly, and a demonstration of the Divine Justice; but no Diminution at all of God's Love and Goodness; by the various acts, whereof he shews now his great and unwillingness to have any of us Perish. And it shews the Reason, why the Apostle said, *He is the Saviour, especially of them that Believe*, because, though he be loving unto all, yet these make a special use of his general Love;

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they walk worthy of their Vocation by their 'special Obedience'; they order all Actions in special conformity to his Commands and Laws; and so a special Application of Christ's Merits is made unto Them, that he becomes Finally, and Effectually, and in the Event and Issue, the Saviour of them onely.

It concerns us therefore as much as our Eternal Comforts amount to, to take great care of our Hearts and Actions; because, whatever Notions some are willing to please their Fancies with, every ones Final State will be suitable to the Nature and Condition of his Works. To be Prying into, and to Depend on God's Secret Counsels, and at the same time to neglect ones own Life, is the ready way to a more fatal downfall, than His, who walks on, gazing upon the Stars, and presently breaks his Neck by tumbling down a rugged Precipice. The Revealed things belong to us; and this is the Revelation, that *If we will enter into Life, we must keep the Commandments*, Mat. 19. 17. *That in every Nation, he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him*, Act. 10. 35. *That we must work out our Salvation with fear and Trembling*, Phil. 2. 12. *That we must not be conformed to this World, but be transformed by the renewing of our Minds*, Rom. 12. 2.

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That we must cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, 2 Cor. 7.

1. That we must be Holy in all manner of Conversation, as He which hath called us is Holy, 1 Pet. 1. 15. And that if God so Loved us, we ought also to Love one another, 1 Joh. 4. 11. These things being so plain, the great business of our Life should be, to let all empty Speculations go, and to Study the Practical Part of Religion. For it is not our Opinions, but solid Piety and Vertue that will carry us out in the day of God. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good: And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk Humbly with thy God?* Saith the Prophet, Mic. 6. 8. And to what purpose hath the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, appeared unto all Men? Why, *That denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this present World,* saith the Apostle, Tit. 2. 12. If then we would answer the Love of God to us, so as to be the better for it indeed, and to reap benefit by it Everlastingly; this is the true Way, viz. to be led by the Goodness of God unto Repentance, to bring forth Fruits Meet for Repentance, to Eschew Evil, to follow Peace and Holiness, to have our Conversation Honest in the World, to do those things

that are Just, and Pure, and Lovely, and of good Report; to serve God acceptably with Reverence and Godly Fear, to lay aside all Bitterness, Malice and Hatred; to put on as the Elect of God, Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any Man have a Quarrel against any; and over all to put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness. These are so many Branches of the whole Duty of Man; and if ye do these things, whatever Conceits uncharitable People may have of you, ye shall never fall.

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## CHAP. IX.

*That we must make God all possible Returns of love. What love is. How excellent when it is a Divine Affection. Two things shewed; First, How we may Acquire the love of God. Secondly, How we are to Express it; (viz) By Obeying him; by Resembling him; and by desiring the Present, and Future Fruition of him.*

*Sixthly, TO dispose our Minds thoroughly for these Religious performances, we should above all things possess our Hearts with such a Sense of God's Love to us, as will naturally excite us to return all possible degrees of Love to him. Love is a most vigorous Affection of the Soul, a Principle of Action, that Works and Exerts it Self*

after an Omnipotent manner, as if it resembled that miraculous Faith, which removeth Mountains: 'Tis an Affection that bears up against all difficulties, that breaks thorough all Opposition, that spares no Cost, that begrudgeth nothing, either of Time or Labour, and that engageth all the Faculties of the Soul, in such generous Undertakings as Dull, Selfish, and Phlegmatick Natures, are hardly capable of opening a Thought to. In short, it is such a commanding Passion, as brings a Man into Captivity with his own Consent, and makes him pleasantly and chearfully a Vassal; witness that single instance of Love, *Jacob* who notwithstanding the unworthy Artifices of his Unkle *Laban*, looked upon his many Years Servitude, but as a few Days, for the Affection he bore to his Beloved *Rachel*, *Gen. 29* As this Affection is more and more Purified, so it riseth in its Vigor; and when it comes to be a Divine Love, placed upon God, and upon the Son of God, it is a most Active Delightful Principle of Obedience to his Will in all things. It is that which sets the Blessed Angels upon the Wing, to Execute his Commands with such Pleasure and Alacrity. The same Divine Principle inspired the Apostles, and other such Saints of *Christ* (especially in the Beginning of *Christianity*) to Do,  
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and to Suffer all that was possible for *Christ's* Name; with that Resolution, Chearfulness and Zeal, which made them Renowned unto all Ages. *The Love of Christ constraineth us*, saith *St. Paul*, 2 Cor. 5. 14. And to omit other Instances, I cannot but remember here the Ardent Zeal of that famous imitator of *St. Paul*, *Ignatius* the Martyr, Bishop of *Antioch* in the Apostolical Age; who being Condemn'd to be thrown to the Lyons, as he was on his tedious Journey to *Rome*, where he was to Suffer, he sent before-hand to the *Christians* there, an Epistle, wherein he most Importunately and Passionately desired them, not to use any means in the World, to prevent his Martyrdom; but rather assist the earnest Desires he had to Die for the Lord *Jesus*. He Prayed heartily, that it might be his Lot, to be torn in pieces by the Wild Beasts, which were provided for him; and that he might find them Fierce and Ravenous. He profess'd, that (rather than fail) he would Court, nay Constrain them to Devour him: He express'd his Wishes, that he might endure any Torments, the Flames, the Cross the united Force of Savage Creatures, Manglings, Dilacerations, the dispersing of his Bones, the chopping of all his Limbs into pieces, the Consumption of his

whole Body, nay all the pains the Devil could bring upon him, so that he might but enjoy *Jesus Christ*. He declared that all the Kingdoms of this World, would do him no good without Martyrdom; and that he had much rather Die for *Christ*, and to be with *Christ*, than be Monarch of the whole Earth; and the true cause of this his Flaming Zeal was, the great Sense he had of *Christ's* wonderful Affection, in Dying for the World; which Commanded from him the return of these Passionate Affections to God and his Redeemer: *Ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρως ἐσταυρώται*, (said he) my Love was Crucified.

I have briefly observed these things to shew, that Love is a most powerful Affection, when it is Sincere, Hearty and Earnest. Of all the Affections of the Soul, it is that which will not be concealed, or lie idle. There is a vehemence in the Nature of it, which will break forth, and discover the Delights and Desires that are within. And therefore to Fit and Temper our Minds duly for those Performances which God looketh for, as a Genuine return on our part, for his abundant Love to us all; and as necessary means, in order to the Final and Everlasting Fruition of himself; we must raise our Affections to this high



high and noble Pitch. to Love the Lord our God *With all our Heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our Mind*, Mat. 22. 37. Our Saviour there calls it the first and great Commandment, not only because it is of prime Obligation, but moreover, because it is the main Genuine spring, whence all Acts of Obedience to God, do naturally flow.

INDEED Solomon tells us. That *the Fear of the Lord, is the beginning of Wisdom*, Prov. 9. 10. And doubtless the consideration of God's Power and Justice, is a very necessary thing to keep People in Awe, nay the only thing that is a Check upon those, who would not stick to commit Iniquity with greediness, and run out into all manner of Excesses, were it not for fear of God's Judgments in this World, and of Hell Torments in the next. But though this be a good restraint, and highly needful in its kind, yet it is far from being so excellent a preservative of Virtue and Religion, as the Love of God is. For this Fear is in some Men the Effect of an Absurd, Slavish Disposition, Proceeding purely from Self-Love, and from a Natural Principle of Self-Preservation; which makes them forbear those Sins for their own sakes only; which other-

otherwise they would readily Commit, were there no Danger: And as for those positive Acts of Obedience, to the Divine Commands which they perform, they proceed too, from the same servile Principle; so that it is at best, a Fore'd and Unwilling Obedience, extorted merely to Pacifie a terrible God, that is Arm'd with Power to Revenge the Contempt of of his most Sacred Authority: And tho' there is (and ought to be) in the very Best and most Holy People, a Fear of God, or a Dread of his Displeasure, and of Eternal Punishment: A Fear that is well pleasing unto God, and very useful to themselves; yet in those Pious Hearts, it is attended and mixed with a very Ardent Love; and so it is an Ingenuous Fear, a Filial Reverence, like that Awful Regard, which Dutiful and Affectionate Children have for their dear Parents; at the same time they are afraid of their Displeasure, and Obey; but Obey with Chearfulness and Delight. It is Love (that most generous Affection of the Soul) it is that which makes Fear such a good and kindly Principle of Action; and the warmer our Love is, the more Extensive, Hearty, and Acceptable will our Obedience be. Therefore that we may Answer the Love of God to us, by a chearful performance of those

those things, which of his great Mercy and Goodness he hath proposed to our Practice, that thereby he may fit us for true Happiness in Heaven; To Answer I say this his unspeakable Love to us all, we should use all possible endeavours, to Enflame our Souls with such a Love towards him again, as wrought so vigorously in the Saints of Old, who counted not their very Lives dear to them, *So that they might finish their Course with Joy*, as St. Paul said of himself, *Act. 20. 24.*

In the closing of this whole Subject, which began with the Contemplation of God's Love, and is now to end with the Consideration of ours: It will be requisite for me to shew these two things,

*First*, How we may acquire.

*Secondly*, How we are to Express that Divine Affection, which I now speak of.

*2dly, First then*, The way to Acquire this Love is, to represent God to our Minds as the best of all Beings; and that in a two fold Respect.

1. As the most Desirable, Delightful, and Amiable good in his Nature; and,

2. As a Being, that is, most Communicative of Goodness, and Happiness to us.

*1st. First*, We should represent God to our Minds as the most Amiable Good in his

his Nature. Some Perfections are very in-  
dear-  
ing, and Attractive of our Affections, tho'  
we be supposed to be never the better for  
them. As, that Perfection of Body, which  
consisteth in External Beauty, and Loveliness;  
inviteth the Spectators Affection, though  
the Person so Accomplish'd is, and is ever  
like to be an utter Stranger to him. The  
Beauties of the Mind are much more At-  
tractive of a Rational Affection, Wisdom,  
Truth, Sincerity, Faithfulness, Gentleness,  
Meekness, Patience, Righteousness, Mercy,  
a Condescending Temper, and whatever  
comes under the notion of true Goodness;  
these are Amiable Vertues, and Dispositions,  
which we cannot but Love one another for;  
though they are in us but in a scanty Mea-  
sure, and are mixed too with many Infirmi-  
ties. Such as they be, they are Derived  
also: We are beholding for them to that Su-  
pream and first Cause, who is the Fountain  
of all Excellencies; and therefore they must  
needs be most Amiable in God, because in  
Him they are Absolute and Infinite; nor  
can we conceive any Perfections Intellectual,  
or Moral, in the most Excellent Crea-  
tures, no not in the Blessed Angels them-  
selves, but what are transcendently Glori-  
ous in the Father of Spirits, whose Excellen-  
cies admit of no boundaries, or Abatement.  
Therefore to kindle and maintain in our  
Hearts;

Hearts, a Rational, Holy and Divine Love, we should represent God to our Minds under such charming *Ideas*, as become a Being so admirably Perfect in himself, so Transcendently, and Gloriously Excellent. We should Conceive of him, as a Being that knoweth how to order all things for the best, and with a strict regard to the good of his whole Creation, and of every part of it, that is but capable of participating of his Goodness : As a Being that taketh a Particular care of Mankind; and more especially of those Men, who Study to live in conformity to his Laws; as a Being that is always steady and constant to his Promises, nor is capable of Lying ( a thing so Repugnant to his most Blessed Nature; that none but the Devil can be the Father of it:) As a Being that is Righteous in all his ways, that loveth Righteousness, and hateth Iniquity, that giveth Laws which are Just and Good, that rewardeth every one according to his Works, and punisheth none but according to Equity and Eternal Reason. We should Conceive of him as a Being, that is ready to take Compassion upon all that need it, and are capable of his Mercies; that is, unwilling to have any of us Lost, that is, slow to Anger, that is, patient towards all, that is, Merciful, Gracious, Long-suffering, abundant  
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in Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin. In short, we should Conceive of God as a blessed Being, that loveth and careth for our poor Souls, Infinitely, more than we our selves do. Under these lovely *Ideas*, God representeth himself in the Holy Scriptures; and to behold him under such ravishing Conceptions, is an effectual way of raising in us a Rational affection to him; because one great Branch of Love consisteth in Esteem; in that Honour and Admiration which springs from the Excellencies we Discern, or believe to be in the Object of our Affections.

2. ANOTHER Branch of it is, the placing of our Hearts upon the Object we highly Admire; the desiring and Seeking after it, and delighting in it, as the precious and dear thing, wherein we conceive our Happiness to be Lodged. And to raise our Affections to this noble pitch, we should represent God to our Minds also as a Being, that is actually Communicative of Goodness and Happiness to us. Love naturally commandeth Love again: 'Tis an Affection of the Soul that cannot resist any thing which is like it self; but presently closeth with the object, that by suitable expressions of Kindness invites and meets it. Here then

then we should consider, how that most perfect and excellent Being hath been before hand with us, what good he hath done us, and doth do for us daily. The Life we now live, and are so very tender of, was given us at the first by that Father of Spirits, and is every Moment supported by his sole Providence which Feeds and Cloaths us, and hath Preserved us all along from innumerable Dangers; from many which Time may have worn out of our Memories; and from more, which we have not minded, or were so hidden that we could not discover them. Those Blessings which lie in common to Mankind, every one hath had his share of: And were particular Persons so advertent as to observe God's particular Providence to them, there is not one in the World but would find himself obliged to make God particular returns of Thankfulness and Affection. God is so Good to the meanest and most Ungrateful People, that if every one would but keep by him two private Registers, one of God's Mercies, and another of his own Actions, the very sense of God's Goodness to every Man (I mean as to the things of this Life) could not but warm all our Hearts towards him, especially if we did open both Registers, and then fairly compare, what we have had, with what we have deserv'd.

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BUT above all we should consider, what God hath done for our Immortal Souls, by his wise and gracious ordering all things that relate to a Life Eternal. That State being Everlastingly Unchangeable, when once Men enter into it, whether it be a State of Blessedness, or Torments, God of his Infinite Goodness, and most tender Compassion, was pleased to make such ample Provision for the well-fare of us all, that one might think it hardly possible for People of Probity and Thoughtfulness to miss of a Blessed Eternity. He sent the Son of his Love to transact the weighty business of a Mediator, that God and Men might be no longer at a distance. The Lord Jesus did innumerable Miracles, to prove and confirm his Divine Authority: He declared unto the World the whole Counsel of God, that nothing of Light might be wanting: He deliver'd us such Precepts as are suitable to our own Reason, and such as are Easie and Delightful to those, who will but Accustom themselves to the observation of them: He hath encouraged us with such Promises, as are enough to Animate us in the greatest Difficulties, and to carry us undauntedly through all. He submitted to a most Painful and Reproachful Death, that he might offer up a full, perfect, and sufficient Oblation,



lation, Sacrifice, and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole World, and that in Vertue of his Death, he might for ever make Intercession for us. He gave his Holy Spirit to inspire his Apostles, and to assist us all; by such kindly Operations as are suitable to Creatures, endued with Rational faculties, to Illuminate our Understandings, to perswade our Wills to purifie our Affections, to strengthen our Hopes, and to Comfort and Cherish us in our Trials. He wooeth us daily by his Ambassadors, who beseech us in Christ's stead, that we would be reconciled unto God. He hath instituted Ordinances, to Seal the Mercies of God to every particular Soul, which will use those Ordinances in a due manner. In short, he hath afforded us all the means, which Reasonable and Immortal Souls stand in need of; and all this for no other end, but to make us Eternally Happy; happy in the fruition of Himself, who is so infinitely Happy in his own Perfections and Condition, that he needeth not the Service or Attendance of Men, or of Angels. These things therefore could not flow from any other Principle, but a Principle of Goodness. And this is the true genuine Reason of Love; whereas those frightful *Ideas*, under which some have misrepresented the most Blessed God, serve to cast a Damp on Men's Spirits,

and to Alienate their Minds and Affections from that Divine and most Amiable Being. *Plutarch* in his Book of *Superstition*, describes those People as God's Enemies, and their own too, who think hardly of God, and believe him to be Fierce, False, Mutable, Revengeful, Cruel, Angry upon every light occasion, Austere, Rigorous and Hurtful. He tells us there, that of all Men, such are in the very worst condition, that they are Afraid of him, even when they have Recourse to him; that they Reproach at the same time and Flatter him; that they Pray to him, and in the same Breath Asperse him; that at once they Fear him, and Hate him; and that though they go to his Temples to Worship, and to offer Sacrifices to him, yet this is such a sort of Courtship, wherewith Flatterers accost Tyrants they Hate, and Curse them in their Hearts, the very time they seem to Honour them. *Plutarch* thought all frightful Ideas to be unsuitable to the Nature of a Deity. God (saith he) is the Hope of Vertue, not a Formidable, Dreadful object. Though Artificers are wont to represent him by Images that have a terrible Aspect, yet Philosophers will tell you, that God's Majesty is attended with Goodness, with Benignity, with a kind and careful Providence. And he was of *Pythagoras*

ras his Mind (how slightly soever some thought of it) 'That wise and Vertuous People are in the best Temper, when they approach unto God, because their Devotions are mixt with fair Opinions of him, and with sincere Affections towards him. These, you will think, were great things for an Heathen to say, and so they were. But we find by constant Experience, that 'tis natural for us to Hate those we are Afraid of, and Nature will work after the same manner, when we have to do with God, if we conceive of him under such scaring notions, as to believe him to be a Sowre, Harsh, Angry, and Tyrannical Being. Such Qualities are very Hateful; they create Horror and Aversion, but 'tis impossible for them to beget any Love; and therefore they must be utterly incompatible with the Glories and Excellencies of God, whose Mercy is over all his Works, and who sheweth his Almighty Power most chiefly, by doing works of Pity and Compassion, and to entertain such apprehensions of him, as are a disparagement to his great Goodness, is the ready way to bring us to the condition of those old Pagans, who Worship'd Evil *Dæmons*, meerly for Fear, lest they should Hurt them.

I deny not, but there may be some Kind and Measure of Love in those, who look upon God as a stern and rigorous Being, if they can but perswade themselves into a Belief, that God is so Partial to Their Souls, as to make them his particular Favourites by a fixt and unconditional Decree. But this degree and sort of Love, is meerly a Passion of the Sensitive Soul, raised by the power of Fancy; because the Belief of this absolute purpose towards Them, in particular, wanteth the Authority of Divine Revelation. Rational Affection, or that Love towards God which is necessary to make all our performances a reasonable Service, is quite another thing. It is a fervour of Heart, excited by the rational Faculty, the Understanding, upon full and clear Conviction of the Mind out of the Word of God; which Conviction is wrought by the frequent Account we find in the Holy Scriptures, touching the intrinsick Excellence and Goodness of God's Nature, and touching his great Love and relative Goodness towards all Mankind: This is the proper, true Ground of that Divine Love I have spoken of, an Ardent and Genuine affection of the Heart, which the consideration of God's Universal Goodness, is apt to kindle in the Soul of every Man, who  
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is not conscious of any willful and gross Wickedness, which maketh him afraid of the Justice of God.

As far as Nature could help them, the wiser and more considerate Heathens attained to the Love of God, by those weak discoveries they had of the Divine Goodness. There are (says *Seneca, de Ira, lib. 2. cap. 27.*) 'Some things which cannot Hurt, they are so Beneficent and Succouring in their Nature, as the immortal Gods, which neither will, nor can be Mischievous, because their Nature is Mild and Gentle. He speaks in the *Plural Number*, to gratifie the Humour of those Times; but he means, that one Supream God, whom the more Intelligent Pagans Worshipp'd; nay, Worshipp'd with Affection; as *Seneca* saith elsewhere (*de Benef. lib. 4. cap. 19.*) 'No Man in his right Senses will be horribly afraid of God, because it is madness to Dread that which is Beneficial, nor can any Man Love that object, which they Fear after that manner. Accordingly *Maximus Tyrius* tells us, 'That the truly Religious Man is the Friend of God, or one that loves God, and that he is therefore Happy, because he is a lover of God, (*Dissert. 4.*) Such considerable Notions those observing Men had of the Goodness of God, as naturally

rally produced great Affection to him. And if we Christians, who have, besides the Book of *Nature*, the Divine Writings, would but attentively consider, by what we read in them, what a great lover of Souls that most Perfect Being is, and what various Methods he hath used to save all our Souls from Perishing Everlastingly, it would be the most Astonishing thing in the World, if such considerations did not render him the most indearing Object, since the very *Publicans* loved those who loved them; nay, since the very Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Cribb.

2dly, HAVING thus shewed the proper way of Acquiring the Love of God; I proceed now to consider how we are to Express it. And that our Practice as to this may be Regular; we must note (what indeed is clear to all Men from the natural Operations of this Affection) that Love excites us powerfully to these three Things.

1st, To observe the Will.

2dly, To resemble the Temper: And,

3dly, To desire the Fruition of the Object, we have an Ardent Affection for.

FIRST,

FIRST, True Love makes us observe ones Pleasure, seeing this Affection is made up of Esteem and Honour in the Judgment, and of Complacency in the Heart, a ready Compliance of the Will must be the next thing; because, this is only the Paying of that Deference which we Conceive to be Due; and an Act of Respect, whereby we are willing and delighted to Oblige. In all Cases it makes us to be yielding: But when it comes to be a Divine Love, and hath the Blessed God for its Object, it cannot but engage us to Entire and Universal Obedience, because the Soul hath God's Sovereign Authority in its Eye, besides those Beauties and Excellencies of his Nature, which are so Amiable, and so Powerful in their Influence: God being the sole Governour of the World, that hath a right to give Laws to our Souls, and a Power to Dispose of them, we are indispensibly Obligated to make his Will (when once it is Revealed) the Rule and Measure of our Actions. And the Necessity of this adds a mighty force to those Inclinations, which Love alone createth evermore in the Mind, to clasp with his Holy and Righteous Precepts. Hence it is, that the Scripture interprets Obedience, as the only Sign and Argument of a Divine Love. *I will shew Mercy*

*Mercy unto Thousands of them that Love me, and keep my Commandments, saith God, Exod. 20. 6. If ye Love me, keep my Commandments, saith Christ, Joh. 14. 15. This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments, saith the Divine Apostle, 1 Joh. 5. 3.*

THIS then is the first way of Expressing our Affections towards God, in return of his great Love and Goodness to us, and to all Mankind, by Doing all things he requires of us, with a ready and chearful Mind. It is not a starch'd Gesture, nor a Formal carriage, nor an External Profession, nor a waterish Look, nor a furious Zeal for dry Opinions; it is not these, or any of these things, that is the Sign of that Divine Love, which is the Noble Principle of Religion. For these outward shews may be consistent with the Hatred of God and Man; and then they are only so many Glosses of Hypocrites, void of that Rational and Generous Affection, which God's Love calls for. 'Tis the entire subjection of the Heart, Operating, and Exerting all its Vigour, by Religious, Sober, Honest, and Charitable Actions: 'Tis the subduing our unreasonable Passions, the denying all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, the cleansing of our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit,



Spirit, the squaring of our Lives according to the Laws of God: To this Pliant and Obediential frame of Soul, that is the true Testimony and Fruit of that Love, which God looks for, and which is in the Sight of God of so great a Price. We must call upon him daily with Faithful and Enflamed Spirits; we must apply our Hearts to the Study and Practice of Religion; we must do Justly, Love Mercy, and walk humbly with our God; we must be sincere, and without any Guile, and deal truly with all Men, as in the presence of God; we must Love one another, and Forgive one another, *For he that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* 1 Joh. 4. 20. In short, to express our Love of God after a right manner, we must obey him in all things; and that, with enlarged Hearts, with Filial Reverence, with Ingenuous Dutifulness, with a ready Will, and with such Alacrity, Chearfulness, and Pleasure of Mind, as becometh those, for whom God hath been pleased to do so many Miracles of Mercy.

SECONDLY, Another proper Act of Love, is, to Study Imitation. This proceeds from a Twofold Cause, partly from the great Value we have of, and the great Complacency we take in the Object of our Af-

Affections, which being so Amiable in our Eye, doth naturally Excite us to transform our selves into a Similitude of it. And partly it proceeds from an innate Desire we all have of being Beloved again, which being impracticable without an Harmony of Mind and Temper between both Parties, it is necessary for the one (that Love may be Reciprocal) to suit himself to the disposition of the other; especially, if that other be a Superior in Dignity, Excellence, and Perfection. Considering therefore that God is infinitely the most Excellent, the most Excellent and Perfect of all Beings, the Love which springs from a Sense of his Perfections, and reacheth after a Plenary Communication of them, must needs Stimulate ones Soul to put on a Disposition (as far as 'tis possible) agreeable to the Mind and Spirit of God.

THEREFORE, that we may Rightly and Eminently express our Love to God; we must by all means endeavour to resemble him, I mean, in all those things that are Imitable by us. We must be sincere in Heart, as that most Blessed Being is. According to the capacities and Powers of our Nature, we must be Holy and Separate from all Moral Impurities, as God is; we must be Patient, Long-suffering, and slow

to Anger, as He is; we must be Treatable and Reconcilable, notwithstanding all Offences and Injuries, as he is; we must be strict Observers of the Eternal Rules of Righteousness and Justice, as He is; we must be Steady and True to all our Promises, as the Faithful God is; we must be Merciful and Benign, Compassionate and Tender-hearted, Bountiful and Impartial, Kind and Good to all Men, even to our Enemies, as that Gracious and Beneficent Being is, who maketh his *Sun* to shine upon the Good and upon the Evil too, and sendeth his Rain upon the Just, and upon the Unjust also. Those Ill-natured People, who are Uncharitable, Rigid, Fierce, Implacable, Austere, Cruel, Revengeful, and Outragious, should look upon God's Glories, the Perfections, and Beauties of his Nature, and should employ their time upon this great Study, how to be like God, according to those charming *Ideas*, under which He is represented unto us in the Holy Scriptures. *Thou thoughtest Wickedly, that I am even such a one as thyself* (saith God,) *but I will reprove thee, and set before thee, the things that thou hast done*, Psal. 50. 21. God will not be served with our Vices, nor must we be such Fools as to think we love him, by entitling him to the Filth and Refuse of our Corrupt Nature. Goodness, is so bright a Beam of  
the

the Divine Glory, and so easie to be seen in every part of the Creation, that Men cannot but discover it by the Eye of Common, Natural Reason. The old *Pagans* Admired it, and believed God to be the Best Being; and therefore Ador'd him, Prayed to him in all their Straits, and Necessities, and Celebrated his Praises as well as Nature could teach them : For which Universal Custom amongst all Mankind, there could not have been any sufficient Reason, had they not Universally Believed, not only the Existence of a Deity ; but moreover, that the Divine Being is a God of Power, and a God of great Clemency, Benignity, and Goodness. This was the true Ground of their Religious Offices, and of that Love, which Nature wrought in their Hearts towards him. And whatever any of us Christians may talk of our Loving God, all is but Froth and Vanity, Senseless and Ridiculous Profession, unless we resemble him in Goodness, *Be ye Merciful even as your Father is Merciful*, as our Blessed Saviour said, *Luk. 6. 36.*

THIRDLY, And Lastly, to express our Love towards God, we must earnestly desire the Fruition of him. This every one seeth to be another natural Act of this Affection, and the most Vehement Effort

Effort of it, to be United to its Object, and to have it in actual Possession; and the Reason is, because Happiness is Apprehended to consist in such Enjoyment. Now God being the true Felicity of the Soul, the only proper Object which the Faculties of the Soul can be Employed upon with satisfaction, and which can fully Answer all our Desires, it is impossible to Conceive, how we can truly Love him, especially under the notion of our Happiness, without Ardent, and Impatient Longings after the Fruition of him.

THIS being so clear, the next thing we are to Note, is, that there is a Present, and a Future Fruition of God. The Present Fruition, in respect of Degree, is very Imperfect, because, we are yet in an Imperfect State; but in respect of Quality and Kind, is the same with that which is yet to come. For it consisteth in Contemplating God according to our Capacities, in Admiring the Perfections of his infinite Majesty, in setting our Hearts on him, as our Supream Good, in feeding our Desires with the Ravishing *Ideas* of him, in Delighting, and being highly pleased with the Sense of him, and in such other Beatifical Acts which are answerable to Rational Appetites. Every Divine Lover hath

hath something of all this in this Present Imperfect State; 'tis the Fruition which now Crowneth our Affections, that Spiritual Fellowship of Communion with God, which we enjoy in this Life. To Express therefore our Love to him in this respect, we should have him always in our Minds, be full of worthy Conceptions of him, and make the thoughts of his Glorious Essence and Attributes to dwell in our Hearts daily. We should Exalt him in our Minds above all things, and make our Souls sensible, that we have none in Heaven but Him, none upon Earth, to be desired in Comparison of Him. We should take Pleasure in Divine Contemplations, and endeavour constantly to Sate our Souls more and more with Delights of that Nature. We should every day possess our Hearts with such Affecting Meditations as These:

O God! How Excellent is thy Name!  
How Radiant is thy Glory! How Adorable are thy Perfections! How Wonderful are thy Works! How Beautiful are all thy Ways! How Righteous are thy Actions! How Equal are thy Commands! How Precious and Sweet are thy Promises! How Infinite is thy Goodness!  
How

How Astonishing are thy Mercies! How Charming is thy Love! How Helpfull and Saving is thy Power! How Tender is thy Pity! How Blessed and Praiseworthy, and Desirable art Thou, O Thou great Lover of Souls, and Redeemer of the World. To kindle in us! such a Divine Flame, and to raise our Desires still, touching the Fruition of God, we should Form our Hearts into a *Devout Temper*; give our Selves to Prayer, and to the Love of it daily. Insensate and Careless People, know not the Comforts, the Pleasures, the Divine Enjoyments, which Transport the Minds of those, who Pray to God with Stay'd, Fervent, and Affectionate Hearts. Certainly what Happiness there is here below, Men of Holy, Humble and Devout Spirits have it: And that our Fruitions thereby may be the greater, and the more desirable, we should evermore be mindful of Publick and Solemn Devotion: Chiefly when Two or Three are gathered together in *Christ's* Name, then is he in the midst of us, and then is God with us; then we Enjoy him in a more especial manner and measure; in the Congregation, in the Assembly of the Saints, in his House of Prayer: There he scatters his Blessings, there he gives us participations of himself; there

he refresheth us with a portion of those Pleasures, which are at his Right Hand. And this was the Reason of those Raptures, Wilhes, Groans and Longings of the Holy Psalmist, which upon the like occasions, we should be full of too: *My Heart is fixed, O God, my Heart is fixed: I will Sing and give Praise. Awake up my Glory, I will go into this Sanctuary, and fall low on my Knees at thy Foot-stool. Like as the Heart desireth the Water-brooks, so longeth my Soul after Thee, O God. My Soul is a Thirst for God, yea even for the Living God: When shall I come to appear before the Presence of God! O How Amiable are thy Dwellings, O Lord of Hosts! My Soul hath a Desire and longing to enter into the Courts of the Lord; for one Day in thy Courts, is better than a Thousand: I had rather be a Door-keeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedness.*

Now see how passionate that good Man's Love to God was, though for the present Fruition of him. And if the Gleanings of the Grapes be so desirable, what is the whole Vintage? I mean, that abundant and Eternal Enjoyment, which is Reserved for us, till  
that



that Day, when we shall have duly transacted all our Services here, and shall pass from these Houses of Prayer, into that Building of God, not made with Hands, the Everlasting Habitation of his Glory.

This Future Everlasting Fruition of God ought to be the chief Object of our Desires, because it is our highest good; and because it is the Ultimate end of the Divine Oeconomy, and of all our Labours of Love in this World.

It is impossible for us truly and earnestly to Love God, and not to groan within our Selves, whilst we wait for this last Adoption; the Redemption of our Bodies, that we may be Cloathed upon all over with Immortality, and have these our vile Bodies changed, and fashioned like unto *Christ's* own Glorious Body, that we may be in every Respect, fit to be with that great Lover of our Souls; and when we see him, may rejoyce with him, and with a joy like unto his, when after all the Ignominy and Torments of the Cross, he had this most Comfortable Reflection, *It is Finished.*

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# PRAYERS.

**O** Lord, who never failest to help and govern them, whom thou dost bring up in thy Steadfast Fear and Love, Keep us, we Beseech Thee, under the Protection of thy good Providence, and make us to have a perpetual Fear and Love of thy Holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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**O** God, who, hast prepared for them that Love Thee such good things as pass Man's Understanding; Pour into our Hearts, such Love towards Thee, that we loving Thee above all things, may obtain thy Promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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**A**lmighty and Everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the Sins of all them that are Penitent : Create and make in us New and Contrite Hearts, that we Worthily lamenting our Sins, and acknowledging our Wretchedness; may  
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*Obtain of Thee (the God of all Mercy) perfect Remission and Forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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**O** Almighty God, who alone canst Order the Unruly Wills and Affections of Sinful Men; grant unto thy People, that they may Love the thing which thou Commandest, and desire that which thou dost Promise ; that so among the sundry, and manifold Changes of the World, our Hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

*Grant*

**G**Rant We beseech Thee, Al-  
mighty God, That like as  
We do Believe thy only Begotten  
Son our Lord Jesus Christ, to have  
Ascended into the Heavens; So  
We may also in Heart and Mind,  
thither Ascend, and with Him  
continually dwell, who liveth, and  
raigneth with Thee, and the Holy  
Ghost, one God, World without End.  
Amen.

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F I N I S.

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